

ders, applying gentle pressure to discourage any more movement.

"Did you want something?" she asked again.

"Where—where am I?" Percy pleaded, trying to comprehend what was happening to her.

"You're in the hospital. You've been here the last few days," the nurse replied.

"But why? What am I doing here?"

"You were hurt rather badly in an auto accident. The men who found you brought you here. Don't you remember?"

"No. No, I don't remember that," Percy replied. Then she added, "Am—am I going to live?"

"Of course. The doctors are taking very good care of you." The nurse comforted her. She adjusted the sheet lightly over Percy's body and patted her on the leg. "You're going to be just fine. I'm glad to see you've regained consciousness. That's a good sign."

"May I please have some ice? I'm so very hot and thirsty," Percy requested.

"Let me see." The nurse moved swiftly and quietly to place a hand on Percy's head. It was very warm and extremely moist. The fever had come on suddenly because the morning temperature reading showed only slightly more than normal. "I think I should take your temperature first, then I'll get you some ice," she told the patient.

Percy's head rolled to one side and her eyes closed as she moaned in pain and exasperation. Why couldn't the nurse just believe that she was hot if she said so? Why did she waste the time in taking a temperature when she could be bringing some ice water to sooth Percy's parched throat?

The nurse gave no indication of the surprise she felt at finding the temperature reading of 105. She merely placed a hand on Percy's arm in an attempt to encourage her.

"I'll bring you some ice chips now," she said. "But you must have only one small piece at a time and let it dissolve in your mouth."

"Could you give me some laudanum for the pain, too?" Percy asked.

The nurse halted in the entryway and turned back to

look at the young woman. What a strange request it was. Had she heard right? "What did you want?"

"Some laudanum for the pain. The pain in my head."

"But we don't give laudanum for pain. I'll check and see what the doctor has prescribed for you," she told Percy.

"Yes you do!" Percy argued. "The doctor gave me some laudanum already, but the pain didn't go away. I need some more."

The nurse looked at Percy with a blank expression. It was obvious that the high fever had caused delirium. She would have to hurry and apply an ice bath to the patient's body in an effort to reduce the fever as quickly as possible. The nurse hurried off in search of an attendant to help her wrap the patient in ice.

The nurse and the attendant covered Percy with wet towels and placed more towels around her on the bed. They then proceeded to fill the towels with ice. It was a rather messy task and very uncomfortable for the patient, but it was still the most effective way to reduce a very high fever quickly. There was no way of knowing how long this fever had been at the present stage. She hoped Percy would fall asleep again. It would make the process easier for all. But Percy remained awake through the entire unpleasant procedure, feeling much as though she were being tortured. In spite of her pleadings for something to eliminate the pain, the nurse merely shook her head and said it wasn't time for her to have anything yet, and there was nothing she could do. The doctor had prescribed an injection every four hours, and there was nearly an hour remaining before the next one was due. Percy shuddered inside her shell of ice and closed her eyes tightly against the misery she felt. Tears came to her eyes but remained there. She bit her upper lip and wished for the comforting presence of her husband. It might be easier to bear if he were here beside her. She was helpless and frightened without him.

"My—my husband," she whispered to anyone who might be within hearing distance. "Where is my husband?"

"He's outside in the waiting room, Mrs. Brooks. He's

been here ever since we found out who you are. He'll be able to come in as soon as your fever is down and I'll have had a chance to remove the ice."

"I want to see him now. He promised to bring me ice," Percy said.

"No, Mrs. Brooks. I brought you the ice. He'll have to wait until we have finished. It won't be too much longer, Mrs. Brooks. You're doing fine and he's very faithful. He hardly even takes time out to eat or sleep, it seems. You're a lucky woman to have such a devoted husband, Mrs. Brooks. He's been very worried about you, you know." The nurse placed a hand on Percy's brow. The fever seemed to be lowering.

"I'm not Mrs. Brooks," Percy snapped at her. Her eyes were closed, and with the merciful release of the fiery burning of her being, she was able to relax, and her mind retreated again to a half-conscious state.

"Why, of course, you are. You're Mrs. Gordon Brooks." The nurse spoke in a firm and confident voice, aware that Percy was slipping back into unconsciousness but wanting to give her a small fragment of reality to hang on to.

"Don't say that! I'm not. I'm not Percy Brooks," Percy insisted, her voice trailing off into the unintelligible.

"Who are you, then?" asked the nurse as she began to unwrap Percy from her icy shroud. "What do you think your name is?" The question was asked not so much from interest as from an attempt to keep Percy alert until her husband arrived.

"I am Theodosia—Theodosia Burr Alston." Percy's voice was low and muffled and almost garbled.

The nurse looked up from her task, but Percy was once again unconscious, sleeping and, at least momentarily, at peace. What an odd thing, thought the nurse. But patients in the IC unit often had hallucinations, and it was nothing to disturb her that this one did. It's just that they didn't often declare that they were somebody else.

Percy remained sleeping when Gordon was again allowed to be with her. The nurse paused beside him to relate that his wife had suffered a very high fever but was resting again.

"I'm sorry it wasn't possible for you to see her, but you'll be relieved to know that she did open her eyes and speak to me."

"That's a good sign, isn't it?" Gordon asked hopefully.

"Yes, that's a very good sign." The nurse smiled at him. "She'll be all right. She has a very good doctor. You don't need to worry, Mr. Brooks."

Gordon had heard that comment dozens of times since he found Percy in the hospital. He knew it was meant to encourage him, but somehow it didn't. Nothing would or could do that except to see for himself that Percy was recovering. But he knew the intentions of the nurse were to comfort him, and he smiled a "thank you" to her.

"She was perfectly clear and lucid for a few minutes, but then I think she slipped back into hallucinations at the end. It's not unusual, particularly with a high fever. So if she says anything strange, don't be alarmed. She's obviously been hallucinating since the injury," the nurse cautioned him.

It struck Gordon as a rather peculiar comment. "What did she say?" he wanted to know. "What kind of hallucination was it?"

"She seems to think she's someone else." For a second, the space between them was heavy with doubt. "She is your wife, isn't she, Mr. Brooks? You're very positive?" The question was ridiculous, but of course it was bound to come up if Percy said she was someone else. Maybe she was suffering from amnesia. Gordon felt a surge of relief at the thought. Amnesia was curable. His greatest fear had been that her brain was damaged, and that would be devastating, but amnesia was curable—or at least it was something they could live with.

"Did she think she was anyone in particular," he asked, "or just not Mrs. Brooks?"

"No, no, she mentioned a name."

Gordon looked at her in surprise. "Really? She told you who she was?"

"Yes, she did," the nurse repeated.

"Well, who was it?"

"It was a very strange name. I'd never heard it before."

It sounded like Theashuh—or Theosia, something like that—Theosia Burr Alman, I think that's what she said."

"Theosia Burr Alman? Are you sure that's what she said?"

"No, I'm not exactly. She spoke so softly, and her speech was muffled, but that's what it sounded like," the nurse told him, nodding her head to emphasize the fact.

"That's a very peculiar name. I wonder what caused her to think of that one."

"I thought you might know somebody by that name ... maybe an ancestor."

Gordon shook his head. "No, the name doesn't mean anything to me."

"Well, if she regains consciousness, would you call me?" the nurse requested of him as she returned to her desk. There were several other patients she must attend to.

"Theosia Burr, Theosia Burr Alman" kept surfacing in Gordon's mind. He wondered if it was just a dream of Percy's disordered mind or if it had some meaning, but he could make no sense of it, and eventually he succeeded in pushing it to an empty corner of his memory.

Later, as he sat in the waiting room, he tried to concentrate on a book he purchased that morning to fill his many hours of marking time between visits to Percy. The nurse passed through at the end of her work schedule. When she saw Gordon, she hesitated.

"I just remembered something else your wife said."

Gordon looked up from his book, waiting for her to continue.

"She asked for some laudanum to kill the pain."

"Is that unusual?" he inquired. He'd never heard the word before, but he knew little of medicine.

"Certainly. Laudanum is an old-fashioned drug, made of opium. We don't use it anymore. It hasn't been used for years. I can't imagine why your wife would ask for it."

"Neither can I," said Gordon. "I haven't the slightest idea how she would know about it."

"Has she ever been ill before—seriously ill, I mean," the nurse questioned.

"No. She's a very healthy person—why did you ask that?"

"She said the doctor had given her laudanum," the nurse explained.

"No. That's not true. I don't know why she said that," he replied.

"Well, then, it must be just as we suspected. She's having hallucinations, that's all." The nurse smiled a little as she said, "Good night. I hope she's better in the morning. You ought to start getting more rest yourself, Mr. Brooks. We're running out of beds in this hospital already." They both smiled at her joke and she left him to resume his reading and waiting.

Gordon let the book rest in his lap and spent a few minutes rotating, bending, twisting, and rearranging this latest bit of information in his mind, coupling it with the strange name of Theosia Burr Alman and then separating them again. It still had no meaning for him. He could find no connection. If there was significance, he failed to find it, and so dismissed it from his thinking.

The nurse was right. He was tiring from the strain of the past few days, and the weariness was beginning to tell in his face, his walk, his thoughts. Shortly after midnight, as he left Percy's bedside, he made the tedious trip back to his room and fell onto the bed. He wondered if it was worth the effort it would require to remove his clothing and slip on his pajamas. He doubted it, but habit proved strong. He pulled his pajamas from the hook in the closet and began the irksome task of changing. Before he finished, the jangle of the telephone bell startled him. The abrupt sound seemed uncommonly loud in the midst of the quiet of the night. Automatically, he reached out his hand to answer the insistent ring.

"Yes," he said in a voice devoid of feeling.

"Gordon, did I wake you? You sound half asleep," said the voice at the other end.

"No, I just got home from the hospital. I'm dead tired," he replied. "Who is this?" Recognition was slow in coming to his weary brain.

"It's Sam" was the reply.

"Sam!" Realization jolted him awake. "Where are you?"

"I'm in New York. Sorry to call you so late, but we've been trying to get you all night. Claire and I are worried about Percy. How is she?"

"Just the same. The doctors and nurses keep saying that she's coming along, but I can't see any change. She's still strapped to all those infernal bottles and tubes and pumps. It's really a sad sight to see, Sam. She's still in a coma, although the nurses said that today she opened her eyes and spoke a few words. I wasn't there when it happened. Wish I had been. But she didn't seem to know where she was, and what she said didn't make any sense."

"How do you mean? What did she say?"

"She told the nurse that she was not Percy Brooks. She said her name was Theo—Theosia Burr Alman—some strange sounding name like that."

"Gordon, this is Claire. I'm on the upstairs phone. I wanted to hear, too. Are you sure that's what the name was?"

"The nurse couldn't remember exactly what the first name was or the last name. The only one she was sure about was the middle name—Burr. But she thought it sounded like Theosia Burr Alman. The nurse said she's just having hallucinations, dreaming she's someone else. I'm inclined to agree. It's nothing to worry about. The nurse said it's not unusual. She'll come out of it, but the other thing that seems strange is that she asked the nurse for some laudanum, said the doctor had already given her some and she wanted more. I didn't have any idea what it was when the nurse told me; but she explained it was a drug that was used at one time, made from opium. Can't imagine where Percy ever heard about it. I know she's never had it before."

"It's a pain-killing drug derived from opium which was commonly used before the discovery of all the miracle drugs we have today," Claire responded.

"How the heck did you know that?" Gordon questioned.

"I read it somewhere. It was in common use in medical

practice long ago—even in this country in the 1800s. I've run into it several times in reading."

"Well, I never had. I guess Percy came across it in some reading, too. I can't imagine why else it popped into her head at a time like this," he added.

"Did you say she's in terrible pain, Gordon?" Sam inquired.

"Yes. She seems to be."

"That's probably why the laudanum occurred to her. It was a very strong opiate," Claire explained.

"You're probably right," Gordon agreed. "I'll call you if anything develops. You don't have to worry about that. Course, if you feel like calling every so often, that's all right with me, too."

"Would it help if I came down there to be with you, Gordon?" Claire had not given up the thought of the trip yet.

"It would probably be good for my morale to have someone with me, but there's nothing you could do for Percy, thanks anyway, Claire."

"Do the doctors have any idea how long it will be before Percy should be showing some signs of recovering?" Sam wondered.

"No, no idea at all."

"Then, maybe I will come down if she's not better in the next day or two," she told him.

"Maybe we'll both come down," Sam amended.

"It's nice of you to offer, but I don't know what you could do other than just hold my hand."

"Call us tomorrow when you get back from the hospital, will you, Gordon?" Claire requested.

"Yes, I will. Just don't expect any miracles. I'm learning they only happen in the movies—not in real life," he cautioned.

"Good night, Gordon," Claire said.

She sat on their bed waiting for Sam to join her. She thought about the conversation and found it more revealing than Gordon had realized. But she didn't want to mention her suspicions to him just yet. She was very anxious to discuss them first with Sam. By the time he

reached the bedroom, she was under the covers with her head propped up on both pillows.

As soon as he appeared in the door, she began. "Sam, did you gather what I did from that conversation about Percy?"

"Just what was it you did gather, my sweet, aside from the fact that Percy is a very sick woman?"

"I mean about what she said to the nurse—that she was Theodosia Burr Alston. That has to be the right name, the one she was referring to. The nurse must have mispronounced it because she wasn't familiar with it. How many names can there be that could sound like that?" she said. "Percy must have said, 'I'm Theodosia Burr Alston.' I'm convinced of it."

Sam nodded his head. It sounded logical. "Okay. Now, suppose you tell me, who is Theodosia Burr Alston?" he said.

"Theodosia Burr was the only daughter of Aaron Burr. There was another Theodosia Burr, who was his wife. They both had the same name. But Percy said 'Theodosia Burr Alston,' so she must have meant the daughter. But why that name? Why did she pick that name?" Claire wondered.

"Angie's a history buff, if you remember. It's not so odd, is it?" Sam asked.

"But why not Cleopatra, or Helen of Troy? I can think of a dozen others I'd like to be before Theodosia."

"I don't know. Maybe it's linked to Angie somehow. Angie was Angelica Hamilton, so why shouldn't Percy want to become Theodosia Burr? There's a kind of logic in it. But it's all hallucination, Claire. So don't worry about it." Sam climbed into bed beside her. "Move over and give me my pillow," he told her.

Sitting up, Claire removed one of the pillows from behind her back, plumped it up, and placed it under Sam's head.

"Sam, does it seem at all possible to you—and don't say anything until I'm finished—that Percy has succeeded in going back in time looking for Damon? If it were anyone else recovering from a head injury, I might not think there was anything strange about such ramblings, but

Percy is unusual. She has an extrasensitive nature. Its potential is untapped, but there is an obvious *simpatico* feeling between her and Damon. It was so evident that you could almost touch it. You could feel it from the first time they met. He gave her his watch, an heirloom which he treasured, so they would have a tangible bond between them. She tried very hard and almost constantly to make contact with him this past winter. Could it be possible that this accident was the catalyst which accomplished that final step for her? When she regained consciousness for the first time, her thoughts were not of her life here, but of a life that she was living maybe as Theodosia Burr. She didn't say she had been—she said 'I am Theodosia Burr Alston,' and she said that she had been given laudanum for pain. It fits in because laudanum was used for pain when Theodosia lived."

"That's all beautifully logical, Claire, but it's also possible that she only dreamed she was Theodosia. You know she's heavily sedated, so she can't think clearly. Just don't jump to conclusions so quickly, Claire. Don't go overboard, not yet," Sam cautioned.

"As I said before, Sam, with anybody else I wouldn't have gone that far. I just can't help feeling there's a connection somewhere between Angie and Damon and now Percy. Why couldn't Percy be reliving the life of Theodosia Burr in search of Damon Aarons?"

"For one reason, because her body is lying in a hospital bed in this century—right here, not anywhere else," he replied.

"Her body but not her mind. Her mind has become separated from her body. Somehow it is living in another time as Theodosia Burr while her body is in that hospital. I don't know how these things can be, but I'm almost certain that's what has happened."

"It's really a preposterous theory, Claire, you know that?" Sam asked as he propped himself up on his elbows. "You're wacky! Okay, tell me why Theodosia Burr, of all people? And why in Charleston, South Carolina? Damon disappeared here in New York. If she were trying to find him, why not here in New York?" Sam was not as easily convinced as Claire. Yes, it was barely possible that it had

happened the way Claire suggested, but the "why" of it was too obscure. There were too many connecting tissues that seemed to be incomplete, leaving the ends dangling somewhere between the start and the finish. He rejected the idea and rolled over once more.

"Sam"—Claire refused to give up—"do you suppose Gordon would mind if I told Elena about this now? I'd like to see what her feeling is. I'd like to hear what her reaction is to this, about the possibility of Percy living as Theodosia Burr in her mind. I'd also like to know what she thinks can be done about bringing Percy back here in case I'm right—I mean whether we just wait for the doctors to heal her or whether there's something we should be trying in the meantime.

"I don't see that it would hurt to ask her about it. Whatever there is to be known about the occult or supernatural world, she's at least aware of it far better than you and I are. Besides, she knows all about the disappearance of Damon, and she's as concerned as we are about his return. If there's the slightest chance that Damon can be returned by helping Percy, she's going to be a great help—that is, provided she agrees with your theory."

"That's the way I feel. I'll call and try to see her for lunch tomorrow. Maybe I'd better go to the library and see what I can find out about Theodosia Burr in the morning."

"Probably be a good idea, dear," Sam added his approval.

For a long time Claire lay with her eyes open, staring into the darkness. The psychic aspects of Percy's illness terrified and fascinated her. Was it conceivable that Percy was attempting to bring back Damon Aarons? Was it even remotely possible that they might succeed? On the other hand, would she be helped or hindered by any attempt Claire or Elena made to assist? Whichever it turned out to be, Claire felt that she could not sit idly by. She must do something and hope that what she did was the right thing to do.

CHAPTER XI

Elena Blakely listened carefully to the story Claire related. She only interrupted once or twice to ask a question. She made no comment on the likelihood of whether or not Claire was right in her theory. She seemed to be turning it all over in her mind. Her face was expressionless. Claire could not read there what she might be thinking. The lack of response made Claire nervous.

"Well, what do you think?" Claire asked her directly when she had run out of anything else to say and could stand the suspense no longer.

"It's a very interesting theory, Claire. I must admit that," Elena told her. She interrupted herself long enough to sip at her coffee, then continued, "But don't you think it's a bit farfetched? There are other explanations for Percy's condition, you know, and much more plausible ones at that."

"I'd probably agree if I hadn't experienced the disappearance of Percy's sister last summer and heard Damon explain so logically how he thought it happened, then the disappearance of Damon, and finally the reappearance of Angie. This seems like a perfectly logical sequence of those events," Claire explained.

"I might find it easier to accept if it weren't for the accident and the injury to her head. That makes me think that it's more likely a hallucination than anything else. It's not the same thing as the deliberately willed time transfer that Damon accomplished, and I'm amazed that you would even consider them together, Claire. You're a very level-headed person as a rule."

"I believe that they are related, that's why. Oh, I'm not

pretending that Percy has the same facility for supernatural events or parapsychology that Damon has—or even you, for that matter. But she does have a sensitivity, and events have conspired with her to make this possible.” Claire was now totally convinced that her theory was correct, and the more she spoke of it, the more firmly it became implanted in her mind.

“Just consider the hard, basic facts, Claire, and leave the rest out of this. First, Angie disappeared—bodily, physically disappeared, then Damon disappeared—physically, bodily disappeared. Then Percy was in an auto accident, and because she mentioned a name when she first recovered from deep shock, you immediately assumed that she had mentally willed herself back into the same time as Damon. Now, when I explain it to you, doesn’t it seem just a bit like you’re trying too hard to make the pieces fit?” There was an unmistakable tone of sarcasm in her voice that annoyed Claire, but she determinedly ignored it and plunged ahead.

“Of course it’s farfetched, Elena, but then isn’t everything that deals with supernatural phenomena, with—the occult, with extrasensory perception? All right, there are times when I question my own sanity for the things I think. But I’m more and more convinced that it is actually true.”

“Does Sam agree with you?”

“Well, not exactly. He’s still undecided,” Claire confessed reluctantly.

“That shows how sensible and level-thinking he is. Now that I’ve had a few minutes to digest what you’ve told me, I really do think you’re being carried away with the whole thing, Claire. Nobody would like to see Damon return more than I would. In fact, I’m sure that no one has spent more time and concentration working toward that end than I have, and that includes your supersensitive friend, Percy Brooks. And if I thought—really thought—there was anything to be gained with going along with your theory, believe me, Claire, I would be the first to put personal feelings behind me and dash to the rescue. But you’ve presented me with a vague—and highly improbable—speculation and want me to solve it

for you. Even if you’re right, I don’t see what I can do about the situation.”

“Oh, I think you can do lots, Elena, I really think you can help.” Even the slightest hesitation was enough for Claire to push forward and try to convince Elena.

“Well, what do you propose I do? I’m not a faith healer. That’s something totally out of my sphere. She’s under good care, I’m sure. The woman has an injury to her head, Claire—to her *head*. How can I help her with that?”

“That’s not the kind of help I want from you, Elena, and you’re aware of it,” Claire insisted.

“But that’s what’s wrong with her, and as far as what you’ve told me, that’s all that’s wrong with her. This blow to her head has caused her to have dreams or hallucinations. I can’t stop her from having dreams. Only a complete recovery could stop the hallucinations. I don’t understand what you think I can do. If you want me to try to help Damon return, fine. I’ve never stopped making efforts toward that. But what can I do for Percy?”

To Claire the answer was so obvious that she couldn’t understand whether Elena was being evasive or truly didn’t comprehend what was needed.

“Elena, I want you to approach this the same way we did Damon’s disappearance. The only difference, I think, is that Percy’s body is here—well, in Charleston, but still in this century. I think her mind, her spirit, whatever you want to call it, separated from her body and went back to live as Theodosia Burr.”

“I’ve never heard of anything like that happening in all my experience. You do realize how absurd that is, don’t you, Claire?” Elena was not being hostile, merely coldly realistic.

“Don’t you think it’s equally absurd that a man should be able to travel back into a previous time simply by a thought process?” Claire asked.

“I suppose it is, but—” Elena began to protest.

“And doesn’t it seem equally preposterous to believe in reincarnation, for a person to live many lives through history? But there have been cases in which a subject re-

vealed things—events, names, dates—things like that, from a life lived previously. Isn't that true?"

"Yes, but those cases have been well documented. All of those cases have been investigated, and some appear to be legitimate." Elena had worked on such cases herself.

"In a way, this seems very similar to that type of thing. It's not reincarnation, of course, but it's very much like it."

"Claire, I find it an extremely difficult thing to believe that this young woman, Percy Brooks, with no training, no experience, could successfully transfer herself back to Damon when I couldn't do it. Now, don't tell me about the sympathetic feeling between them, I don't want to hear it. Damon and I worked together in the world of parapsychology for many years, and in spite of what you might think about our relationship, it was very close. I'm more than just fond of Damon—I want to marry him, when he returns. Mrs. Brooks knew him how long—two or three days at the most? I can't believe that she could accomplish what I haven't been able to do. It's just too inconsistent. If anybody was able to transfer back to Damon, I would be the one, not someone he barely knew." Elena's voice was animated and full of fire and resentment. Claire wondered whether it was worth the effort to try to reason against the animosity which she obviously felt for Percy, whether she should appeal to Elena's human kindness and sympathy if such existed. Surely she must possess those qualities if Damon would consider marrying her. She decided to simply forge ahead with the plan she had half formulated and hope that Elena could be persuaded to assist with it despite all objections and reservations she might be harboring.

"Elena, I grant you that you have a better and prior claim to Damon than Percy and that if he were to respond to anyone through mental communication, it would be you, but perhaps you've tried too hard. Perhaps it's necessary to accomplish it with a mind in a state of total repose, or a mind completely devoid of disruptive thought waves—a complete vacuum—such as a mind which is in a state of shock." Claire was encouraged when Elena did not interrupt her with some new objection. "Just for the

sake of speculation, let's assume that Percy's mind was jolted into a perfectly suspended state as a result of the accident. And we know that the most prevalent thought in her mind for several months prior to the accident was the attempt to contact Damon Aarons and somehow be instrumental in his return." She paused for a second, then further bolstered by Elena's nod of agreement, plunged on. "And we can assume that from wherever he is, Damon has been sending thought communications to Percy. He is unaware that you even know what has happened to him, remember. With her mind in its perfect state of repose, Percy somehow received his communication and her mind sprang into action, making the transfer back through time to be with him. Like a beacon, his thoughts guided her straight to him. Think about it, Elena," Claire urged her. "Doesn't that sound plausible?" Elena did not immediately reply, and Claire felt she was scoring a major victory.

"Maybe—maybe. It might be possible. It's not very probable, however," Elena qualified her agreement.

"I'll accept possible. That's good enough." Claire smiled across the table at her companion. "Then if it's possible, I think she may be in greater danger than either the doctors or Gordon realize."

"Why?" Elena glanced at Claire over the rim of her coffee cup. If Percy was in danger, might Damon be also?

"This is where I think your help is needed. This morning I went to the New York Public Library and did some reading on the life of Theodosia Burr."

"What did you find? Anything interesting?" Elena asked, mildly attentive.

"There doesn't seem to be a great deal that's been written about her life, but some of the facts are revealing. First of all, she was the only legitimate daughter of Aaron Burr, and she adored him with an almost unnatural devotion—which he returned. Secondly, she married a man named Joseph Alston, who owned a large rice plantation in South Carolina, in the area of Charleston. In fact, they had a home in Charleston also, where they apparently spent a good deal of time in the winter. Alston entered politics after they were married and finally became gover-

nor of South Carolina in 1812. Theodosia had only one child, a boy, and for some reason after his birth, she was not too well. I didn't learn the nature of her illness, but she was never the same after that. And perhaps most important of all, in relation to Percy's claim to be Theodosia Burr, is her death. It seems that her father spent several years in Europe, following a trial for treason. When he returned, he arrived in New York and sent for Theodosia. He sent an emissary to bring her back to New York by boat. Because he had just taken office as governor of the state, which has a good-size coastline, her husband couldn't go with her on the trip. The United States and England were engaged in the war of 1812, you remember. However, since Theodosia was ill, Joseph thought it might be good for her to spend some time with her father. He wrote a 'Letter of Safe Passage' requesting that she be allowed to make the trip in safety in the event that they were captured by any English warship. She set sail for New York aboard the *Patriot* in December 1812. The ship sailed out of the harbor and into the area that we call the 'Bermuda Triangle'—and just disappeared. Nothing was ever heard of Theodosia or the ship or any of its passengers again.

"She sailed into the 'Bermuda Triangle'?" Elena's interest was aroused. "Of course, I remember now that was where I came across the name of Theodosia Burr. It was in relation to her disappearance."

"That's why I think you're the person to help Percy. If her mind is locked with that of Theodosia, she'll die when Theodosia does. Isn't that so?"

"That's the theory, certainly. But what makes you so positive that Theodosia is dead? How do you know that she isn't still alive in that mysterious sphere known as the 'Bermuda Triangle'?" Elena asked.

"Oh, come, Elena. You can't be serious," Claire responded.

"Yes I am. I've investigated that phenomenon, and I do believe there is something supernatural about it. Why be so astonished? Do you realize that the U.S. Navy does not allow either planes or boats to go through the 'Bermuda Triangle'?" Elena replied.

"Come on, Elena, you're making that up."

"No. It's completely true. They don't," Elena assured her. "If you can accept your theory on Percy and Theodosia, why are you so sure that there's nothing supernatural about the 'Bermuda Triangle' disappearances?"

"I suppose you have me trapped there, Elena," Claire admitted slowly. "Still, the fact remains that we have to bring Percy back to this time before she shares the fate of Theodosia, whatever that is."

"And how do you propose to do that?" Elena inquired.

"I don't really have any plan. I thought you might help me with that," Claire responded.

"I haven't had any experience, Claire. Damon is the only person I've tried to contact—except for the spirits, of course—and I haven't had any spectacular luck reaching him. In view of that, I don't understand why you think I could succeed in bringing back Percy."

"I don't know who else to turn to. I don't know what else to do," Claire admitted. "I only know that I don't have the experience or the sensitivity to even attempt such an enormous undertaking."

"Well, I can't say I feel terribly flattered, but at least you're honest about it. It is quite an impossible story, you know. And if you did go to someone else, you would have to explain the disappearance of Damon Arons and why it wasn't reported before. I would be careful not to confide in too many people, if I were you, Claire." There was more than a touch of irony in Elena's voice.

"Elena, there's no place at the moment for sarcasm. I don't want to quarrel with you. Will you come to Charleston with me and see what you can accomplish there for Percy?" Claire asked directly.

"Percy and I are not exactly sympathetic souls, Claire. If you remember, and I'm not certain that I would have any success reaching her in spite of everything I could do. I feel sorry for the young woman, yes. I'd feel sorry for anyone who'd been severely injured, but I don't think I'm the right person to help. I don't have enough faith in the project."

"But you've got to help, Elena. I was counting on your help. No one else would understand the situation as you

do. You're part of it. You've been in it from the very beginning," Claire reasoned.

"Not the very beginning," Elena objected.

"All right, not from the disappearance of Angie, but very soon after Damon disappeared. You're more familiar with the occult world and parapsychology. You must be able to transfer your ability to contact the spirit world and make contact with Percy's conscious mind. You can't be willing to let her expire with Theodosia." Claire was making a valiant effort not to become emotional. She didn't want to make a scene in the restaurant. She deliberately chose a quiet, subdued restaurant where they could talk. Now she regretted that decision. Naturally, she didn't expect immediate acceptance on Elena's part, but she certainly hadn't anticipated an antagonism—and unwillingness to be helpful. Elena wasn't even willing to try. Claire was vexed and frustrated. She didn't seem capable of finding the words to persuade Elena that her help was indispensable to Percy.

"I admit that the 'Bermuda Triangle' aspect of all this fascinates me, Claire. Maybe I was carried away for a second with the intrigue of that particular thing, but I'm just skeptical of your basic premise. Supposing—just suppose, mind you, that Percy has somehow become commingled with Theodosia Burr—and that doesn't mean I can accept that theory—how can we tell exactly what time she's living in? How can we know that she's in any danger of sailing out into the 'Bermuda Triangle'?" Elena asked.

"Of course we can't tell what phase of her life she's now living, but it would seem safe to assume that it's somewhere compatible with Percy's age. Don't you think that would be true?"

"It sounds reasonable. How old do you suppose Percy is?" Elena asked.

"I'd guess she's in her early thirties," Claire answered.

"Do you know how old Theodosia was when she disappeared?"

"About twenty-seven, as far as I can determine. I didn't go into it very thoroughly," Claire explained.

"I suppose that's close enough to make a comparison," Elena conceded.

Claire felt the first surge of hope since she started the conversation. She seemed to have beaten down all Elena's objections. "Theodosia was ill the last several years of her life, and Percy is ill now. That's another similarity."

"Slowly, Claire, slowly," cautioned Elena. "You still haven't been able to offer any satisfactory explanation to connect Theodosia with Damon. And that's the heart of the matter. If I could find a connection that I could believe in, something to make her transfer back in time pertinent, then perhaps I could accept that it happened the way you propose, but there are as many arguments against the possibility as there are for it, Claire—more in fact."

Claire's hope vanished as quickly as it had come. "I just know that I have a feeling, Elena. I have a very strong feeling that it is so. How can you be so skeptical? The unusual is supposed to be your everyday business," she protested.

"But it isn't the business of those of us involved in the occult to accept every occurrence without investigation. Most of what we deal with can be explained in very ordinary physical terms. It's not that often that we work on something that's truly mystical."

"Well, this I accept."

"I know you do, Claire. But look, why Charleston, South Carolina? You've explained that Theodosia lived in Charleston, or on a plantation near Charleston, with her husband. Fine. That establishes a proximity to Theodosia but not to Damon. He disappeared in New York. I just think you're so concerned with Percy that you're building a case from nothing. I think you're trying too hard to make an association which probably doesn't exist."

Elena was not to be rushed into making any such rash conclusion. She fervently wished to find a connection. If she could, she supposed that she would find some way to help, but there was no such connection that she could see.

"Isn't it possible that Damon may be someone who knows Theodosia, a friend who knew Angelica Hamilton also?" Claire asked.

"That's the only possible solution, of course, but there's nothing to substantiate it. I'm sorry, Claire, but the only

thing I can see to do is wait until there's a more definite indication to prove that what you suspect might be right. I'm leaving for Europe the end of the week. When I get back, I'll give you a call. Maybe Percy will be recovering by then and you can just forget about it. If not, maybe there'll be something else revealed." Elena gathered her purse and prepared to leave. It seemed pointless to continue the conversation. "Claire, think of this as you would a legal case. You can't go into a court of law without the evidence to support your case. This one would be immediately thrown out for lack of evidence."

Claire reached out a restraining arm, holding Elena by the wrist. "You can't just brush this aside, Elena. Time is too important. Damon pointed out that it's not possible to determine at what rate time passes in any other given decade. It may be accelerated so that a year passes in a day. Even if you don't believe that Percy has gone back to contact Damon, couldn't you accept my belief that she has? Couldn't you trust my feeling that she actually lives as Theodosia Burr—and may die as her if we don't bring her back?"

"Oh, yes, the 'Bermuda Triangle.' For a moment I'd forgotten about that. Wouldn't it be a remarkable thing if I were able to pull her back to the present time from the 'Bermuda Triangle'? Think what a fantastic accomplishment that would be. To solve the riddle of the 'Bermuda Triangle,' what a scientific revelation that would be," Elena ruminated. Her eyes sparkled with the excitement of the thought. She seemed to be in another world, far away from the reality of the restaurant full of diners about her, unaware of the alarm she had aroused in her luncheon companion.

"Elena, oh no. You couldn't do that. That would mean waiting too long." Claire was disturbed at the turn her companion was taking in her thinking. She was beginning to wonder if it had been wise to call on Elena for help after all. It seemed the right thing to do at the time, in fact, the only thing to do. But now, she was not so sure. She hoped to appeal to Elena's better nature, but each time she seemed to be reaching her, Elena skillfully sidestepped and turned about again. Claire had hoped the men-

tion of the 'Bermuda Triangle' would intrigue Elena and interest her in helping Percy, but now she regretted it. She could not allow Elena to delay a rescue in an attempt to discover the mystery of the 'Bermuda Triangle.' Perhaps she would be long dead before they ever began, a corpse, bloated and decaying at the bottom of the ocean or perhaps a homeless spirit forever trapped in the secret world of the 'Bermuda Triangle' into which boats, planes, people disappeared, never to be seen or heard from again, as though they had been spirited away to some vacant space between earth and sky—there to remain forever, or until they had served their time as unclaimed, unhappy souls.

"Elena, you can't be serious," Claire protested.

"No, I can't—for the simple reason that I don't believe in your theory," Elena said.

"All right. I intend to go ahead and make every effort to save Percy anyway—with or without you. I can't sit by and wait for a sign, or even more horrible, wait until I think enough time has passed so you can snatch her from the jaws of the 'Bermuda Triangle' in order to learn what that phenomenon is. Percy is not an experiment, Elena. She's a living person—a friend," Claire said.

"What do you propose to do, Claire?" Elena retorted coolly.

"I'm going to Charleston just to be near Percy. I'll decide what I have to do after I'm there," she replied.

"What good will that do? What can you do in Charleston that you couldn't do here?" Elena inquired.

"I don't know, but just being there should make contacting Percy a little simpler."

"Have you ever in your life tried to contact someone in another time, Claire?" Elena asked a bit too patronizingly.

"Only Damon when he disappeared."

"Did you have any luck?" Elena pressed.

"You know I didn't," shot back Claire defensively.

"Then why do you think you're going to be able to contact Percy on your own?" Elena asked.

"I didn't say I could. I only know that I have to try."

Sam has agreed to go with me. After he learns that Theodosia died—"

"Disappeared," Elena corrected her.

"All right, disappeared. When Sam knows that Theodosia disappeared at an early age, he'll be even more anxious to go."

"Does Sam agree with your theory that you can do any good? You said he hadn't made up his mind about Percy and Theodosia coexisting in the nineteenth century. If that's true, how can he think that you could be any help to them?"

"I should say that he's willing to let me try if I feel I must. I was hoping that you would agree with me, and that would help convince him."

"I'm afraid that if you were counting on me to be your main witness, Claire, I'm going to have to disappoint you. But I will make a small bargain with you. I will postpone my trip to Europe and take a few days right now to consider your theory. If I can find any reason to agree with you, I'll try to decide just exactly what I can do to help Percy. As you know, my first reaction is negative. But the 'Bermuda Triangle' fascinates me. I realize that it's a dangerous thing to play around with, so if I decide that you're right, I'll be doing it to help Percy and not to discover the secret of the 'Bermuda Triangle.' You know that my first reaction is negative, and I expect my final decision will be also, but if you like, I'm willing to wait a few days and think about it before I give you any final word."

"Elena, I can't tell you how happy I am to accept that," Claire responded.

"I didn't mean to encourage you. I only wish there were something to pull me back into time to find the connection between Percy and Damon. That's the big stumbling block. But if you're right, it might be a way for me to aid Damon in returning—not just Percy. As you know, Percy and I had a rather natural feeling of resentment toward each other. Anyhow, whether or not you believe this, Claire, I've always been fond of you and Sam. For your sake, since it obviously means so much to you, I'll promise to think over everything you told me, and you

must promise not to do anything rash on your own. I'll call you in a few days. If you learn anything new about Percy's condition, call me right away." She rose from her chair and smiled at Claire, a smile which was almost tinged with sympathy. "Thanks for lunch," she said and left the restaurant.

The meeting with Elena had not gone at all as well as Claire hoped it would. Claire was left with an empty feeling. She hadn't considered what her next step would be if Elena refused to help. Now it seemed she wasn't willing to even try until she was totally convinced of Claire's theory. Sam might be able to accept it merely because Claire was so thoroughly convinced, but Elena was not. If her decision was negative, what would Claire do? Was it possible that Elena was right and she was wrong? Maybe Percy was only dreaming, hallucinating as everyone else seemed to think. Maybe Claire was trying too hard to read a supernatural meaning into the few simple words that Percy had uttered. There wasn't any real connection between Percy Brooks in the Charleston hospital and Damon Aarons's disappearance. But try as she might to convince herself that Elena was right, a tiny corner of Claire's mind stubbornly refused to give up its conviction that, somehow, Percy was living the life of Theodosia Burr and was doing so because that's where she knew she would find Damon.

Claire was jarred from her reverie when the waitress, who had been hovering about the table unnoticed, finally asked if she would like anything else. Claire looked up and saw that the girl was anxious to clear the table. She muttered an apology for being so long, picked up the check, and left the room, stopping on her way out to pay the cashier. As she did so, she resigned herself to the fact that she had probably wasted twenty dollars and the last few hours of her time on Elena. Well, she felt better for making the effort, and there was still a chance, but a very slim one, that Elena would decide there was enough truth in Claire's theory to give it a try. Claire determined to call Gordon again that night to see if there was any change. Nothing would have pleased Claire more than to discover

her theory was as insubstantial as a mound of cotton candy.

But the news Gordon had for them was far from reassuring. Percy had not recovered consciousness again. Her heartbeat was still slow but steady. Her breathing was still shallow but regular. She did not respond to outside stimuli and, except for the one time when she had awakened to claim she was Theodosia, she had not given any sign of awareness at all. The doctors were beginning to worry but kept repeating that all was being done that could be done for her. They could do no more than treat the symptoms as they arose and wait to see what else developed. Most puzzling of all was her brain pattern. They had tested the brain's activity, and it seemed incredible but her brain was very active, almost as though she were engaged in everyday activities. No one had an explanation for this mystery.

"Sam, I'm sure of it. I'm sure of it. Her brain is active, but her body is lifeless, inert. I think that's the last piece of evidence I need to convince me that she has gone back to the life of Theodosia. But why? Why? Why? Even if Elena tells me it's stupid, I want to go to Charleston. Please, Sam. I must go," she entreated him.

"I think we must go, Claire. You are so certain of this that I have to accept that there is some cause for it. You may just be right, dear. The only reservation I have is that I don't know what you and I can do about this," he said apologetically. "Do you suppose we should wait to see what Elena decides?"

"We'll have to anyway, darling. I don't see how we can get away before two or three days. We don't even have plane reservations. I'll have to take care of that tomorrow."

"All right," Sam agreed.

"We'll let Gordon know the night before we leave. He'd only tell us the trip was useless if we let him know too far in advance."

"I'm sure he would," Sam agreed again.

"In the meantime, I'll see what else I can find out about Theodosia Burr," Claire decided.

"Do you think you need to know anything more about

her? I can't see that it would make much difference," Sam replied.

"Maybe you're right, but there might be something that would be helpful. You never can tell, Sam," Claire said.

"I wish we could check up on the question of time transfer by going to the library. Wouldn't that be nice?" Sam said.

Claire wished that Damon were here to advise them. Would he approve of what they were doing? There was so little that they knew and so very much that they didn't know. The practice of parapsychology was never meant to be left in the hands of amateurs like Sam and herself, but perhaps only amateurs such as they were would be foolish enough to believe such extraordinary theories could be true, or have the effrontery to believe that they could reach someone in a past century.

CHAPTER XII

The days passed slowly for Theodosia, but she made steady improvement and with the coming of spring, her spirits began to revive. At no other time of the year was she able to truly and completely enjoy the beauty of her adopted home in South Carolina; but in the spring, starting somewhere in March and on until June, the whole of it was a lavish spectacle of colorful blossoms amid intense green lush growth. Everywhere there were azaleas in bloom in every shading of pink and orange and coral, accented by occasional white. There was mountain laurel, pink and white, in abundance; wisteria in vibrant shades of lavender and purple, hanging like bunches of grapes from their vines; and there were camellias providing an array of color, their almost too perfectly formed blossoms filling the air with sweet perfume. There were sprays of yellow jasmine, climbing rose bushes in profusion, and the delicate beauty of the dogwood trees, and close to the ground, growing in the shade of the old pine trees and the mighty ancient oaks, hung heavy with gray-green moss, were heatherbell, hawthorn, lotus, and iris blooms. Theodosia's heart could not help but respond to the brightness and gaiety and promise of life anew that spring brought to the land around her. And of course, the deep emerald green of Joseph's rice fields brought satisfaction and hope for an abundant crop.

The weather had grown balmy and pleasant. She was able to stroll through the plantation gardens and to sit under the trees watching little "Gamp" at play. He was a strong, sturdy, active child, which gladdened her. Not for anything would she have him inherit her sickly disposi-

tion. She had hoped that she would be able to take her son to his grandfather this spring. It seemed an eternity since he had visited with them at The Oaks, and she wanted to be with him when he was replaced in office on the fourth of March. Surely he would need her encouragement and support at this crucial time in his life, but Joseph would not hear of it. From the letters Aaron wrote her, she knew that he had led a more active social life this past winter than ever before in Washington. There was sympathy for his position of outcast, refugee, fugitive from New York and New Jersey. Many friends wished to express their compassion for a man who had risen so high only to fall so low, and who soon would be leaving their midst. His future, though uncertain, was decidedly not promising. But Aaron Burr was not a man to wallow in regret or sympathy. The past was past, and the future was ahead. The future was what interested him, and it was a future for himself and his loved ones that he intended to build—a legacy for his daughter and for his grandson and heir. He had not spent all his time merely enjoying the social amenities extended to him; he had been very busy cementing relations with certain men who could be most useful to his bold plan, which was now becoming more and more solidified in his mind.

Very early in March he called upon his good friends Dolley and James Madison to say farewell.

"We shall miss you, Aaron. You have other true friends here who would rally round you and assist you in every way possible, should you decide to remain in Washington," Dolley told him. Her generous, outgoing nature prompted her to make an effort to persuade him to stay in the capital, where they could, at least, extend to him a hand of friendship and an occasional meal.

"If I could be swayed in my decision, my dear Dolley, it would be the result of your persuasive pleading. But there is nothing for me here. There is no further use for me in the political life of our country, that is all too evident. My future in the government died and was buried with General Hamilton, and so I must move in another direction. Even you must admit, my dear, there is a more than ample supply of accomplished lawyers in this city.

They do not have need of another. You, of all persons, must surely be aware that the friendship afforded me by President Jefferson is not genuine. It is but a surface gesture done to impress the masses. He has little use for me, in truth, and can be rid of me none too soon." Aaron Burr had no delusions about his position in the capital.

"But, Aaron, you have my unstinted backing," argued his friend James. "It shall never be withheld from you. Although, I admit, it may take some while for others to forget and accept you on the basis of what you have to offer our country, I do not fear to assist you. I feel I can risk that much without fear if you do likewise."

"Know you that I am grateful, James, but I must find my own place in the world. I cannot allow you to forge a niche for me," Aaron explained. "I have an independent spirit which would not allow me to be the underling of any man, not even one of your outstanding qualities, which I greatly admire, my friend."

"I never thought to make you an underling, but an equal, Aaron," protested Madison.

"Aaron, surely you do not believe that we have been patronizing you because of your misfortune." Dolley spoke her mind as always. "I should be most provoked with you if you thought so little of our affection as to believe it could be thus."

"I did not mean to imply the flaw was in the nature of either of you, my friends, but rather in myself. I have a driving, ambitious spirit, and I must follow my own ends. At the moment, I feel the need for some adventure, some travel, something to revive and rekindle my hopes. I would like to spend some time free from the suspicion that each stranger I pass on the street might be a bailiff from New York or New Jersey come with a warrant to return me to one or the other of those states where I would be forced to stand trial for murder. And, you see, you could offer me no assurance that I would be safe from arrest if I should remain here in Washington. While I am Vice-President, I enjoy immunity from such arrest, but that will continue only three more days until March fourth, at which time George Clinton is to be inaugurated as the new Vice-President. Then I am become a private

citizen and subject to arrest and extradition as any other. You would risk much in a futile cause. And so, this is farewell, at least for a time. I shall leave this city as soon as it is practicable, and my return is in doubt. Nonetheless, we must remain in communication with one another, for who knows what the future may hold? Good-bye, my Dolley," he said. She could not resist the desire to throw herself into his arms and clutch him in a fervent embrace as tears stained her delicately painted face. Gently, he dislodged himself from her arms and extended his hand to Madison.

"I thank you sincerely for your offer, James. In my hour of need, I shall remember that I have a friend." The two men shook hands in silence, and as Aaron Burr left their home for the last time, Dolley Madison sought the comfort of her husband's arms, the tears streaming down her face.

The thought of remaining in Washington after his immunity from arrest had been removed was not more than the remotest possibility to Aaron Burr. He may have been a man who had done a foolish thing or two in his lifetime, but he was definitely not a foolish man. To spend his remaining years in a filthy prison cell was not the sort of future that he envisioned for himself. The thought was equally distasteful to Damon Aarons, who was restless to return to Percy. To his thinking, it seemed most reasonable that they would be able to transfer themselves back to their own generation from New York, where he had entered this time period in the body of Aaron Burr, but it was more and more evident that was not to be. The second choice would be for both of them to be in Charleston, but Burr showed no sign of returning there in the immediate future. Whatever they did, it must be done together, for it would be more certain to succeed if the two of them worked in unison. He was most impatient to undertake the attempted return because the tone of Theodosia's letters to her father indicated that she was still not well. He could not suppress his concern for Percy herself under the circumstances. Yet he could do nothing to alter Aaron Burr's firm decision to travel through the western territory of the United States. He could but further bide his time

and opportunity, a practice at which he had become adept in the last year of their union. He must take each day in turn and be thankful that Burr had determined on an early departure from the city of Washington.

As on every other day since his return to the capital, Aaron Burr mounted the rostrum at noon as the Senate convened on March 2. He struck his gavel three times and announced to the few members who were gathered that it had been his intention to remain until his successor had been inaugurated into office, but a slight indisposition forced him to reshape his plans, so with the Senate's kind indulgence, he would like to make a few pertinent remarks at the present time. There was a great buzz of activity in the chamber as the import of his statement struck those assembled. Pageboys were sent scurrying off in all directions to summon the absent members. On the rostrum, Aaron Burr smiled indulgently at the flurry of activity his statement had caused. He waited patiently for the absent members to arrive and seat themselves. The gavel lay still in his hand, and his eyes came to rest on this symbol of authority which he would no longer wield. Carefully he examined it, imprinting the image of the wooden hammer in his mind so that he would be able to recall it in the future when that same hand would be wielding a scepter in its place, a scepter of gold encrusted with jewels of untold value that the world might clearly see the heights to which this remarkable man was able to rise, like a phoenix from the ashes of his degradation. On the other hand, perhaps he might prefer that it should be of carved wood, as this one, to remind the world that he had once been Vice-President of the United States before it rejected him. The irony of the last idea appealed to him.

In less than ten minutes, every member of the Senate was in his seat, and the press gallery was filled to overflowing. So many people tried to crowd into the visitor's gallery that it appeared order might never be restored to the chamber. They were shoving and fighting for seats, pushing each other against the walls in order to make room for one more, or in order to gain a better view of the small but elegant man on the rostrum.

Finally, it became apparent to Burr that the jostling could conceivably continue throughout the day, and he lifted his gavel and struck it with deliberation three times. A hushed and expectant silence fell over the assembly. Aaron Burr stood before them, small in stature, but erect and with great composure. He spoke with great dignity and not the slightest touch of remorse. His voice was sure, melodic, and as spellbinding as it had ever been as he maintained that at no time in his four years with them had he knowingly or deliberately offended any senator. He realized that it was possible that he might have erred from time to time, but he had always tried to be guided by the rules of parliamentary procedure and, above all, principle. Aaron's voice soared to the back of the chamber as he proclaimed:

"This house is a sanctuary; a citadel of law, of order and of liberty; it is here—it is here in this exalted refuge—here, if anywhere, will be resistance made to the storms of political frenzy and the silent arts of corruption. And if the Constitution be destined ever to perish by the sacrilegious hands of the demagogue or the usurper, which God avert, its expiring agonies will be witnesses on this floor.

"I shall, until I die, feel reverence for this house and the noble principles of which it is the primary guardian. In taking my leave of it and of you, I feel like the young man who leaves the dwelling of his parents to make his way in the world. This house is my mother, and has nurtured me; this house is my father and has given me strength.

"May the Almighty bless you and keep you in all that you do together here and separately in your own homes. I ask only that you not forget me, for I, of a certainty, shall always remember, with respect and affection, the years I spent here."

Aaron Burr stood for a moment looking out over the members who had been his friends and supporters and those who had been his enemies in the past years. Now that the time had come to actually take leave of them, parting was a difficult thing to do. A heavy silence hung in the room as he wondered if he should say something in addition, perhaps a ringing phrase that would reverberate

through history, but none came readily to him. The past must stand on its own. It was over, it was finished, and his role in his country's government, likewise, was finished. He released his hold on the gavel and bowed to the members, then he turned abruptly and walked rapidly up the center aisle and out of the chamber for the last time, never once pausing to turn or look back. As he made his way up the aisle, the members of the United States Senate rose in unison and bestowed upon him the tribute of a standing ovation. He had won their sympathy and nearly became rehabilitated in their eyes. With his head held a little higher than usual and his shoulders firmly set, Damon Aarons and Aaron Burr ignored the tears of gratitude which caused his eyes to shine as he proceeded from the chamber, down the hall and to his office. Burr was not a sentimental man, and he was not prepared to allow sentiment to overwhelm him on this occasion. He was heading toward a brilliant future, and that thought would carry him through the next few difficult days in triumph. In less than forty-eight hours, he would be embarking on that future. There was no time now to succumb to regrets or recriminations over what might have been. Still, had he been able, truly and completely able, to direct his own destiny, he would have preferred to be President of the United States, but since that had been denied him, he was determined to be head of some country—a country of his own making.

Two days after his farewell, not waiting to witness the inaugural ceremony of his successor, Aaron Burr arrived at the home of his friend, Alexander Dallas, in Philadelphia. He had been most discreet about his departure, traveling on horseback from the capital, stopping to change to another horse at a stable behind a small inn and then finally transferring again to a coach with heavy curtains, which he remembered to keep closed the entire trip. Undetected, he arrived at his friend's home and began a round of conferences, which he had taken great pains to arrange previously. He met with minister to the United States from Great Britain, Anthony Merry, whose acquaintanceship Burr had carefully nurtured while they were both in Washington. It did seem advisable, however,

for the purpose of these conferences that they both come to Philadelphia.

On the afternoon of his arrival, Burr arranged to rendezvous with Merry in a private room of a tavern on the edge of Philadelphia. Burr was the first to arrive at the tavern and requested that the tavern-keeper bring up to the room his finest Spanish sherry, and a good hearty port for his guest. After a few minutes, the tavern-keeper returned with the spirits which had been requested, as well as a respectable looking bottle of malmsey. The tavern-keeper's daughter followed with two glasses on a tray, which she placed beside the bottles, brushed a careless lock of hair from her eyes with the back of a hand, and smiled slyly at Burr. In return, he graciously executed a deep bow, causing her to dissolve into a girlish giggle as her father pushed her from the room. In a few minutes, he was back again, this time followed by Anthony Merry, a serious man, dedicated to his country and to his position as minister. The two men greeted each other briefly. They had met several times before, both officially in Washington and secretly as they did now. Burr knew that both Merry and his wife strongly disliked President Jefferson, and he hoped to take advantage of that dislike as well as the man's devotion to his country.

"I am about to embark on a trip to the West, Mr. Minister, and am in possession of certain knowledge of which I wanted to make you aware before I departed," Burr began.

"I appreciate your desire to do so, Mr. Burr," Merry replied.

"I desire to repeat my offer to lend my assistance to His Majesty's government in any manner which you may deem fitting, particularly in regard to a possible separation of the western part of the United States, and as I am now embarking on my travels to the West to ascertain the feeling in that part of the country, I considered it seemly to explain exactly what I desire from your government in the way of aid."

"This idea of separation from the Union appears to be a most popular one, Mr. Burr. No doubt you are aware that certain Federalist senators visited me a few months

ago to enlist my efforts on behalf of certain New England states who wished to separate from the Union. They, too, were seeking support and assistance from my country. It seems that the simplest way to solve domestic disputes is to withdraw from the Union. If the obligations of membership become too distasteful, why then, leave. Leave! It seems a remarkable thing, Mr. Burr, that your country has been able to remain united as long as it has. There is evidence of very little unity in it. It would better be termed the Disunited States of America." Merry laughed at his own little joke. It was true that he did not like Jefferson, but he was not certain that he trusted Burr, and he preferred that it be known in the beginning of the conversation that Mr. Burr's proposal was by no means unique or original. It seemed that every faction these days sought aid from Great Britain. Merry stood and poured himself a glass of the ruby red port before taking his seat again. He crossed his legs and waited for Burr to resume his attack.

"I am in possession of certain information, Mr. Minister, which causes me to believe that my venture is not only unique but assured of success. In the winter we were visited in Washington by three gentlemen from New Orleans—Mr. Sauv , Mr. Derbigny, and Mr. d'Estrehan—who came to the capital to express certain grievances before the government. Actually, there were many things to which they objected. They said the people of the Louisiana Territory did not like our American ways, resented interference with long-established Spanish precedents, and they intensely disliked their American governor Claiborne. But most important of all, they had been promised that they would be admitted the rights of American citizenship as soon as possible. Now a year has passed, and they are still treated like conquered subjects. Because they were so extremely dissatisfied, they talked quite openly of their feelings to me when I received them. They used the word separation over and over again. They assured me the feeling in the Louisiana Territory was widespread. I believe this territory is not only ready but eager to secede from the Union. They lack merely the proper leadership and the funds to do so. All that is needed is for England

to provide two heavily armed frigates and four or five smaller war vessels at the mouth of the Mississippi, and the loan of half a million dollars, which will be repaid with interest once the new country is established. In addition to this, I can assure you of special trading rights with the new country. You will be privileged to obtain the products and natural resources of the country at a far lower price than any other nation. This, of course, would have a favorable effect on the growth of Canada as well." Burr knew the importance of emphasizing the growth of Canada, giving Great Britain an even greater stronghold on this continent.

"Your argument, Mr. Burr, sounds most intriguing, supposing that you are, indeed, able to urge the inhabitants of the Louisiana territory to actually secede from the Union. You have not stated in so many words, but I assume that you intend to direct the settlement of this new country yourself."

"I do most earnestly believe that they will secede from the Union either with or without me to lead them, since they feel so strongly that they are being treated unjustly by President Jefferson and the Congress. I have little doubt that it is merely a matter of time and preparation. I would prefer to see it happen under a responsible leadership, which can bring to this area the understanding and proper administration for which they have petitioned. Yes, without exhibiting excessive pride, I say that I can provide them with that leadership, and that I would be remiss in my feeling for my fellow humans if I do not do so. It could be greatly to your advantage, sir, for England to support and aid this endeavor, for it is bound to succeed, and the country which does come to our aid is most certainly the country which will be allied as our closest friend. When it is known that the area around New Orleans has seceded, Kentucky and Tennessee will most surely follow after, and possibly Ohio will be moved to join the new nation at the same time. Since war with Spain now seems inevitable, a small force will enter Texas to annex that territory, and then push on deeper into Mexico, annexing additional territory wherever it is found that the people will welcome liberation."

"Do you feel no guilt, sir, no remorse, at proposing to separate a large part of your own country from the Union?" Merry asked.

"I am not separating the country, Mr. Minister. The country is separating itself, and as you noted earlier, this is not the first time the suggestion has arisen. I am merely providing leadership for those areas which may wish to join together under a new flag. You cannot be so naive, sir, as to be unaware that my country has turned its back on my services," Burr replied with his chin held high and his eyes level. To him he spoke only the simple truth—truth as he saw it. He would, to his mind, be the salvation of those discontented states which desired to separate themselves from the Union.

"Mr. Burr, I think you are a dreamer, but quite possibly a man of talents sufficient to cause those dreams to come to fruition. The results of such an act would be of great benefit to Britain—at a cost which is not unreasonable. I intend to recommend that Britain accept the bargain and act promptly and accordingly. I shall dispatch Colonel Charles Williamson to England at once with your proposal." The conference was ended as far as Merry was concerned. He rose and bowed to his companion. "Good day to you, Mr. Burr. I shall let you know the decision from my country as soon as I receive word. When do you depart for your journey?"

"Within a few weeks. I have requested a special riverboat to be built for me so that I might travel down the Ohio River. When it is ready, I shall take leave."

"I wish you a good journey." Anthony Merry bowed again and swept from the room.

Aaron had carefully controlled his outward expressions. He did not want to reveal to the British minister his jubilation over Merry's endorsement. Most certainly he had succeeded, and the effort was easier than he anticipated. If the minister of Britain recommended acceptance of his plan, it was but a matter of time before he would receive word to proceed and the reward of a sizable amount of money with which to proceed. He could not wait to impart the glorious news to Theodosia. Summoning the tavern-keeper, Aaron requested that he be

brought paper, ink, and a quill. He then sat down and began to write his well-loved daughter. His time was so thoroughly occupied that he had neglected her of late, and he did not wish to delay imparting to her this glorious news.

"In ten or twelve days, I shall be on my way westward . . . as the objects of the journey, not mere curiosity, or *pour passer le temps*, may lead me to Orleans, and perhaps farther, I contemplate the tour with gaiety and cheerfulness . . . I have such a levee about me of visitors, from distant parts, that it is with difficulty I can find an hour, day or night, to write a letter, or attend to private concerns. I have not been a day without some one, two, or more visitors. They stay generally two or three days with me, and I am privileged to take them with me wherever I dine."

On April 10, 1805, Aaron Burr left Philadelphia on horseback in the company of Mr. and Mrs. Gabriel Shaw. They rode to Pittsburgh, where they boarded the boat he had ordered built to his specifications. It was, in truth, less of a boat than a floating house. It had cost him \$133 and followed his specifications precisely. It was of seasoned oak, sixty feet long and fourteen feet wide. It contained a sitting room, a dining room, a kitchen complete with a brick fireplace, two full bedrooms, roofed from stem to stern, with steps to go up and a walk on top the whole length. It had glass windows, and additional space sufficient to house her captain and crew. It was an extremely comfortable barge and caused quite a stir of excitement among the people on the banks as they passed. On the trip, they passed other barges, but none so elaborate as that of Colonel Burr. They had traveled about four days, stopping at various sites to explore the countryside or the towns along the Ohio River. But on the fourth day, they came upon an island in the middle of the river, of rather a good size. It would have taken them by surprise had it not been that they had only the day before stopped at Marietta, Ohio, where they were taken to see the Indian mounds, and other sights of the area. At Marietta they were told of the most unusually beautiful mansion which had been constructed on the island by a man

named Harman Blennerhasset. There he lived in total contentment with his wife and their small children. Aaron was fascinated by the prospect of seeing the island.

He ordered that his boat put in at the dock. He was curious to see the island home of such a fortunate man, who was reputed to be both wealthy and cultivated. No sooner did the remarkable barge draw near the shore than one of the Blennerhasset slaves sent word to the house occupants that visitors were coming. Bessie, Mrs. Blennerhasset's personal maid carried the news to her mistress. Margaret Blennerhasset immediately dispatched an invitation for the visitors to be her guests at dinner. Although her husband was away at the moment, she would do her best to extend the hospitality of the house and island in his absence, she assured them.

"Tell Mrs. Blennerhasset that I shall be delighted to accept her most kind invitation," Aaron Burr replied. "And with her kind permission, I should like to stroll the grounds."

The island itself he judged to be about three hundred acres. And the home which the Blennerhassets had built was quite a large one. The main building faced east and was two stories high. The central structure he estimated was probably fifty feet long and thirty feet wide, with a large porch across the front. On either side were wings, one story high each and about forty feet long, which connected the main building with buildings on the north and south, each of them being two stories high. The house and wings were curved and faced a fan-shaped lawn set in the midst of beautiful trees and shrubberies.

"What a truly outstanding setting," Burr murmured to himself. "I do believe a man could remain forever here and never want for more beauty and serenity than this island has to offer. The man Blennerhasset is a king in this his own small realm." His eye was caught by a streak of yellow on the front porch of the mansion. As he looked more closely, he could see that it was a young woman, a rather tall, red-haired young woman who was approaching him. As she drew nearer, he also realized that she was an unusually attractive young woman.

"Colonel Burr," she said as she drew near enough for

him to hear, "what a great honor it is to have you stop at our island. My husband, Harman, will be most distressed to learn that he has missed your visit. I hope I might prevail upon you to remain here with us until his return."

"When might that be, Mrs. Blennerhasset? I do assume that it is Mrs. Blennerhasset."

"Oh, forgive me, sir. I am Margaret Blennerhasset. My husband, Harman, is away on business but should be returned within a day or two. Perhaps you would enjoy a rest, and I am certain that I would enjoy having you remain as a guest." She smiled sweetly. It was not often that they were blessed with a celebrity to visit them on the slightly remote island retreat they had chosen for their home. It was not that they lacked for guests, because the Blennerhasset residence had become the social center that she had dreamed it would be, with people from Parkersburg and Belpre, which was situated across the river from Parkersburg, and also from Marietta gathered at the mansion for parties and intellectual soirees. Often they came for musical evenings, which Harman loved so much. On these occasions, he entertained his guests by playing his violin, which he did particularly well. For her part, Margaret had inaugurated dramatic readings and favored her guests with her own interpretations of plays or selections from books. Still, it was rare that they received any illustrious guests, and never one of the importance of the former Vice-President of the United States.

"I'm afraid I must continue on my journey, Mrs. Blennerhasset, but I shall be pleased to accept your most gracious invitation to dine with you. The mansion and the island are captivating. You must be serenely happy here," Burr responded.

"Yes, Colonel Burr, we are—or rather we have been until recently. But Harman has suffered some monetary setbacks and is growing restless on the island. Oh, I do not mean that we have depleted his inheritance. But I believe he would like to become actively engaged in enterprise again and enlarge his capital. But no matter, I should not have mentioned it, we'll not talk of that. Since you admire our home, perhaps you would care to examine the interior," she offered.

"Indeed I would. It reminds me of the home I had in New York before my term in government, an estate called Richmond Hill—oh, not in its design, mind you—but in its feeling. My home, too, commanded a magnificent view of the river."

"On this side of the house is Harman's library, laboratory, and his study," she said as they entered one of the wings. "He's interested in a great many things, which is one reason we thought to be content in such an isolated setting. He plays the violin marvelously well and enjoys playing it for hours. I delight in listening to him, so you have the two necessary elements, an artist and an appreciative audience." They passed through the study into the laboratory. "Harman also enjoys puttering about with his inventions," she said.

"The equipment looks like more than just the rudimentary needs of a man who would putter, Mrs. Blennerhasset," commented Burr, looking at the expensive and elaborate equipment of the laboratory about him.

"Yes, indeed so. He truly enjoys working on scientific experiments and inventing many different things. He's really quite accomplished at it, too. I tell you that with pride." Margaret laughed. They passed into the library with its rows and rows of books lining the walls. A large wooden globe stood in the corner together with a telescope. But it was the quantity of books which impressed Burr. Inspecting them, he found they covered a wide range of subjects.

"Does your husband have them here for display, Mrs. Blennerhasset, or does he read this extensively?" he inquired of his hostess.

"I'm afraid he reads a great deal more than he should, Colonel Burr. His eyesight is rather poor, I fear, but he loves so to read that I cannot forbid him that pleasure. It would be such torture for him to have the books surrounding him and not be able to use them. If I might be able to persuade you to stay, Colonel, they are all at your disposal, of course," she told him.

Aaron smiled. "It's a most tempting offer, my dear lady. I must confess that I have a definite weakness for good books—and for attractive ladies." His eyes seemed

to command her attention like a magnet. As their eyes met, she felt a warmth flooding through her, causing her cheeks to turn a bright shade of pink. It had been many years since Harman had spent effort in flattering her. She was unaccustomed to it, and while she found it most pleasant, it also made her a bit uncomfortable. The man who was flattering her was much too attractive himself for her to flirt with while her husband was absent.

"Let me show you the main hall of the house, Mr. Burr. I'm particularly proud of that," she said, leading the way into the mansion proper.

The hall was most elaborately decorated. The ceiling was painted in a mural design. The furniture had been ordered from Europe, and the magnificent rugs on the floor also. The total effect rivaled a Paris salon of the highest order. The rest of the house was equally handsome, and it occurred to Burr that Mr. Blennerhasset was obviously a man of means, no matter what financial reverses he may have suffered. It also occurred to him that this island would be a marvelous retreat on which to store supplies, and perhaps even men, if necessary. He must make it a point to return to the island and meet the land owner. He meant to interest Blennerhasset in his own enterprise if possible.

The evening passed pleasantly for both the hostess and her guest. The charming and cultured Aaron Burr was the guest of an equally charming and cultured hostess, who lavished all her attention on his comfort.

"I should like you to meet my daughter, Theodosia, Mrs. Blennerhasset," he told her. "She, like yourself, is an extremely well educated and cultured woman, with an independent spirit. I think you would be most companionable together. And I say that to flatter you, because of anyone I know, I would rather be in the company of Theodosia than all the learned men in Washington."

"I should be delighted to meet her. You must bring her here to the island, Mr. Burr, when you return. On that visit you must be prepared to stay for several days—perhaps you could spare a few weeks or a month. If I can promise Harman that you will return in the near future,

he will be not so disappointed at having missed your first visit to our island."

"In that event, I shall return very soon, my dear Mrs. Blennerhasset," he agreed.

As evening fell, they drifted to the porch, where they sat in wonder at the moon and stars. Margaret explained that she knew only a little of the astronomy which Harman found so fascinating, though he made quite a serious study of the subject.

"And what is it that interests you, Mrs. Blennerhasset?" he asked.

"Oh, oh dear." She laughed. "I am interested in my children, my husband, my home, as all women are, Mr. Burr," she replied. She sat for a few minutes wondering if she should confide in him her other interest. After some consideration, she said, "But there is something else which has been of intense interest to me for some years. I'm afraid I was thought unusually queer by the other people around here for awhile. Would you truly like to know what that is?" she asked.

"Indeed I would," Burr replied. He wondered what deep, forbidden secret she was about to divulge. She was, obviously, not a frivolous woman, and he couldn't imagine what she was about to reveal to him.

"A few years ago when I had taken the children to New York for an excursion, there was a process of preventing a communicable disease that was being discussed and was then in the experimental stage. I spoke at length with the doctor who endorsed the theory. He called the process 'vaccination.' He had succeeded in convincing several other doctors of the validity of his theory, although it was not so readily accepted by the majority of people. I asked him to explain it to me one day when we met, and what he told me seemed extremely logical and sensible. I became very enthusiastic about the possibilities of vaccination. The children were vaccinated by the doctor that visit, and I asked if I might learn how to handle the virus in order to bring it back here with me to vaccinate the people of this area. When I returned, I was able to bring some of the virus with me and to keep it preserved. I invited all the parents in the area to bring

their children to the island—and I can tell you that it took a good deal of persuasion for some of them—then I was able to inoculate them—and it was a successful procedure, I might add, if you will permit me." During the narration of this story, Burr watched carefully as her face grew animated and her eyes glowed with an inner light. It obviously meant a great deal to her.

"Perhaps you missed your true calling, Mrs. Blennerhasset. You apparently would have made an excellent nurse."

"Oh, no, Mr. Burr. I am what I was meant to be, but it was a very satisfying experience to know that I was preventing suffering and disease. I've not had a great deal of opportunity in my life to help others, and it was most gratifying. You see, my family was not wealthy, but certainly we were not poor. I received an excellent education in a private school, and immediately after I finished Harman and I were married and came to America. Harman inherited his wealth from his father. We stayed in New York for a short time, then we came west and Harman fell in love with the island and the seclusion it offered. We built the house, we had children, and we have made friends. It is not an exciting life, perhaps, but it is satisfying. Do not think that I would choose to change a day of my life or to trade it for any other. Still, it's nice to say that once I was of service to others." Her voice dropped to a quiet murmur, she spoke more to herself than to him.

There followed an awkward silence, broken at last by Burr.

"Does your husband own the whole island, Mrs. Blennerhasset?" he asked.

"Oh my, no. We own about one hundred and seventy acres, but that is quite enough, I think," she said.

"Truly, it's a good bit of land," Burr agreed. It would be enough for any purpose that might be needed. It had grown quite late, the moon had chosen to disappear behind a cloud, and the increased darkness as it disappeared caused Burr to become suddenly aware of the lateness of the hour. He stood, and Margaret did likewise. For the first time he was aware that she was several inches taller than he. He held out his hand to her. "Your hospitality

has left nothing to desire, Mrs. Blennerhasset, except to hope that we might soon meet again. My humble thanks to you." He kissed the hand she offered him and bowed slightly in his most gallant manner, then he turned and walked briskly across the lawn to his barge.

"We look forward to your return, Mr. Burr," she replied, watching him only briefly as he became a part of the darkness. She entered the house, picking up a candlestick which had been left for her on the table in the front hall, and climbed the stairs to her bedroom. It had been a most charming day.

In the morning when she rose and looked out her bedroom window toward the river, Margaret Blennerhasset was more than just a little disappointed to find that the barge had slipped quietly away into the river to continue its course down the Ohio. She turned over in her mind all that had been said between herself and Aaron Burr the day before, committing each word to memory as best she could that she might be able to recite—no, dramatize—them for her husband upon his return. Gazing at the rippling waters in the distance, she wondered if Aaron Burr would remember his promise and one day return to the island with his daughter.

Aaron Burr, with his customary, methodical organization, catalogued at the back of his mind the possible advantages of nurturing a friendship between himself and the owner of Blennerhasset Island at sometime in the future. But for the present, he was enjoying his excursion into the West. He continued to float down the river, making frequent stops for visits, responding courteously when asked to deliver a speech, for speechmaking was a practice he relished. To capture the attention of an audience, to sway them in favor of or against a given cause had always thrilled him, and he found that he had lost none of his old persuasive powers. He was still able to speak forcefully, but subtly at the same time, and his audiences responded by roaring their approval. He felt a need to share this adulation with Theodosia and wrote her a letter full of his adventures. To encourage her about the project they had discussed, he added.

"In Frankfort and Lexington, I was received with the

adulation that, in a monarchy, is reserved for a king admired, respected, and loved by all."

It pleased him to think that he was received as a monarch, and he knew that she would share his delight. In spite of the pleasure he found in the trip, he was surprised to discover that he thought of Theodosia more and more these days, not only thought of her but longed for her, particularly in the unguarded moments when his mind was at rest. He had loved her all her life, and always thought that she was the best of women, a worthy companion, but now more than ever he yearned to have her with him. The suddenness and intensity of this desire bewildered him. He did not understand why it should be so important to have her with him now. But Damon Aarons understood it quite well. He was the one who longed for, yearned for the presence of Percy. With an extraordinary instinct, he felt that they must not only attempt their escape but accomplish it as soon as possible, but nothing could be achieved until they were reunited. He had even ceased his struggle against the will of Aaron Burr for the moment, afraid that by some miracle he might wrench himself free only to find that Percy had been left behind in a situation, a culture she did not understand, facing an uncertain future as a dual personality, aware of herself and her situation but incapable of struggling against it, incapable of accomplishing a return to her own life by means of her own will. That prospect was even more dreadful to anticipate than had been Angie's situation. Damon Aarons refused to face such a possibility because he was responsible, after all, for the difficult position Percy was now in. She had come back to this time for the sole purpose of helping him to escape. It was inconceivable to him that he might try to escape without her, but it was equally difficult to arrange to be with her. Devoted as father and daughter were, Theodosia and Aaron Burr went their separate ways.

Aaron Burr decided that he must write his feelings about the people of the West to Theodosia and Joseph at the earliest opportunity. He had formed a definite impression about these men who inhabited this territory. The frontiersmen of the Western states through which he

had traveled would, he felt, make ideal recruits, and their value to the project would be boundless. They were fiercely independent, courageous almost to a fault, and few of them felt closely tied to the central government of the United States, which they felt grossly favored the Eastern states. There was a great belief in self-reliance among these men due to the very nature of the territory in which they lived. If he could discipline these men, calling upon his military training of former days, he could forge an excellent military troop. This information was carefully catalogued in one of the many special files he kept only in his mind. Thus far, he decided the trip had been as successful as he could hope.

At Louisville, he determined the time had come to leave the barge and continue on by horseback. His reception in Tennessee was more tumultuous than had been any previous welcome. He was warmly embraced by the frontiersman Andrew Jackson and taken to his own home, the Hermitage, where Burr, as was his custom, revealed only that part of his plan which he felt his host would approve and succeeded in thoroughly charming both Andrew and Rachel Jackson and enlisting their aid and that of their friends. It did, after all, appear that war with Spain was imminent, and it was not only reasonable but admirable that this patriot wished to gather troops and military supplies to march into Mexico on behalf of America as soon as war was declared. To this end, Andrew Jackson pledged his help and a number of warships.

Delighted with the way the pieces of the puzzle were falling into place, Burr continued down the Mississippi River in a barge presented to him by his old friend, General Wilkinson, one of the few men Burr dared take into his full confidence. At last, he came to New Orleans, where he had such a splendid time that he decided to stay three weeks. New Orleans was the center of all elegant and literary life in the area, and he carried with him letters of introduction to all classes of society. He met d'Estrehans, Bores, and Marignys; bishops took him to visit Ursuline convents, John Bartow Prevost, his stepson, was still a federal judge, and his old friend Edward Livingston had only recently married the beautiful Louise

d'Avezad, and they were making their home on Chartres Street in the Faubourg.

Upon his arrival, Aaron Burr had intended to stop only a few days, but found that he was deluged with so many invitations that he could not resist a longer hiatus in his travels. He was the guest of honor at private dinners, balls, public banquets, and receptions. And he somehow found the time to meet in the early evening or late at night with certain prominent and discontented citizens of the town, certain French grandees, whom he flattered by talking with them in their own language about war with Spain and the possibility of an expedition to Mexico. His words fell on sympathetic ears, and by July, when Burr felt the need to return to the East in order to discover the final word of approval from England, he had enlisted the aid of many different factions in New Orleans, and he had been most discreet in his dealings. No one person knew specifically the extent of his enterprise. He spoke in the most satisfying but ambiguous terms, causing each new advocate to read into the endeavor what he most wanted to believe. Daniel Clark, an important businessman of New Orleans who owned a fleet of commercial ships and vast warehouses in the city, was one of the largest landowners in Mexico and lived in almost constant apprehension that the government of Mexico would seize his property. He listened most eagerly to the proposals of Aaron Burr and even pledged his help and financial aid to the cause. Several of his friends were likewise persuaded to pledge their moneys in support of Colonel Burr. Feeling that he had accomplished all he could for the present, and only the final loose ends need be neatly entwined to complete the preparation and begin the campaign, it was a very optimistic and lighthearted Aaron Burr who departed New Orleans to retrace his steps and return to the East.

But somewhere, something had begun to go wrong. Someone had either deliberately exaggerated his proposal or misinterpreted his intentions, and as his journey continued eastward, rumors spread in advance of his progress that he was proposing a revolution, not merely a peaceful separation, of the Western states.

Aaron Burr arrived in Lexington to be presented with a copy of the *Lexington Gazette*, containing an article spelling out that rumor. With a drawn and serious face, he read the accusation:

"How long will it be before we shall hear of Colonel Burr being at the head of a Revolutionary party on the Western waters? Is it a fact that Colonel Burr has formed a plan to engage the adventurous and enterprising young men from the Atlantic States to Louisiana? Is it one of the inducements that an immediate convention will be called from the States bordering on the Ohio and Mississippi to form a separate government . . . How soon will the forts and magazines and all the military posts at New Orleans and on the Mississippi be in the hands of Colonel Burr's revolutionary party? How soon will Colonel Burr engage in the reduction of Mexico by granting liberty to its inhabitants, and seizing on its treasures, aided by British ships and forces?"

The insinuation of the article disturbed Burr. In not-too-well-veiled terms, it called him a revolutionary traitor. He had no thought of rebelling against his country, merely taking advantage of the sentiments of the men in these Western states to separate themselves from the central government, which cared not a fig for their wants, needs, or desires, and leading them to settle a more satisfactory government of their own. For the rest of the day, the thought disturbed him. At length, he succeeded in pushing from his mind the unsavory insinuations, convinced that no one with whom he had dealt could possibly take the article seriously. And within a day or so his buoyant confidence had returned in full force, and he was his customary charming self when he departed from Lexington.

It was on his return trip that Aaron Burr learned of certain lands along the Washita River, most admirably suited for settlement by any group of men foolhardy or brave enough to undertake the expedition. The prospect attracted him. It might serve as an alternative in case such alternative was ever needed, and the information was very carefully filed away in his mind for future reference. His reception at his stopping places was not as tumultuous on

the way back as it had been on the way down to New Orleans, but no matter, he said to himself. "I'm tired of all the fuss and to-do now and wish only to return as quickly as possible to receive the news from Great Britain that the expedition may begin."

Not long after his arrival back in Washington City, Burr received a copy of a letter which Daniel Clark had written to General Wilkinson on September 7:

"Many absurd and wild reports are circulated here and have reached the ears of the officers of the late Spanish government, respecting our ex-vice-president. You are spoken of as his right hand man; and even I am now supposed to be of consequence enough to combine with generals and vice presidents. . . . I believe that Minor, of Natchez, has a great part in this business, in order to make himself of importance—he is in the pay of Spain . . . Perhaps finding Minor in his way, Mr. Burr was endeavoring to extract something from him; he has amused himself at the blockhead's expense, and then Minor has retailed the news to his employers . . . The tale is a horrid one . . . Kentucky, Tennessee, the state of Ohio, with part of Georgia and Carolina, are to be bribed with the plunder of the Spanish countries west of us, to separate from the union: this is but a part of the business. Heavens, what wonderful doings there will be in those days! But how the devil I have been lugged into the conspiracy . . . is to me incomprehensible . . . Amuse Mr. Burr with an account of it. But let not these . . . almost imperial doings prevent you from attending to my land business in Illinois. Recollect that you great men, if you intend to become kings and emperors, must have us little men for vassals . . . Think of this . . . that I may have . . . wherewith to buy a decent court dress, when presented at your levee. I hope you will not have Kentucky men for your masters of ceremonies."

Aaron Burr was considerably disturbed by the letter. He read it several times before he put it aside and contemplated his answer. Obviously, Daniel Clark was also disturbed by the newspaper articles which had begun to crop up around the country, as well as by the rumors being spread by this Stephen Minor, rumors which he had

heard before but had brushed aside as inconsequential. Now it appeared that these very rumors might bring to a halt his plan before it ever had a suitable beginning. He must now expend all his energies in finding the necessary supply of money from whatever source was at hand—and as soon as possible. And he must soothe the anxieties of Mr. Daniel Clark in order to prevent him from withdrawing his pledge of money. If Mr. Clark were to withdraw, certainly his friends would follow suit in very short order. That very afternoon, Aaron Burr sat at his desk to write to Daniel Clark: "I love the society of that person [Minor], but surely I could never be guilty of the folly of confiding to one of his levity anything which I wished not to be repeated. Pray do not disturb yourself with such nonsense."

He posted the letter before departing to meet with Anthony Merry again.

The butler at the British legation led him impersonally into the front room and indicated that he should take a seat. Aaron Burr, however, selected to stand. He thought better on his feet, and even better if he were allowed to pace the room a bit. This meeting would be a crucial one, he felt, and therefore he elected to remain standing.

Anthony Merry greeted him most hospitably upon entering the room. "Ah, Mr. Burr, how good to see you again, my dear sir. And how were your travels through the American West?"

"Thank you, Mr. Minister, they were both enlightening and pleasurable. It's gracious of you to receive me on no previous notice," replied Burr as the two men shook hands.

"A welcome respite from some rather dull official duties this afternoon." Merry sat and indicated that Burr should do likewise. Although he was reluctant to do so, Burr did not wish to risk seeming disrespectful. Aaron Burr sat in a chair opposite the British minister.

"My tour through the West revived my rather sagging spirits, Mr. Minister. Everywhere I was afforded the greatest respect and admiration. I was feted and dined, entertained and called upon to make speech after speech. Throughout my journey, I was completely free from any

stigma. In truth, this tour has convinced me that the time is ripe to begin the expedition. We can expect nothing but success from every quarter; all that remains is for your government to supply us with the ships and the necessary number of pounds which I requested before my departure. When we commence now rests solely in your hands. Indeed, sir, my visit today is made in the anticipation that you have good news for me in regard to the time that I may expect your government's aid."

Anthony Merry rose from his seat. The intense gaze of Burr's dynamic and eager expression caused him a certain amount of uneasiness. In spite of repeated urgings, Mr. Merry had been unable to solicit aid from his government as yet. In truth, it did not now look promising for Mr. Burr's project to receive aid from his government.

"I feel I must disappoint you on that score, Colonel Burr. The crown is still considering your proposal. The British Government needs to feel that it would not be precipitating hostilities with the United States, and it needs time to consider all aspects of your proposal thoroughly. There are ramifications which certain British gentlemen feel might place their country in a most compromising position. But they have not entirely closed off all consideration." He turned to face the former Vice-President, who sat with a crestfallen manner, trying to disguise his disappointment. "I cannot promise that their decision will be favorable, but I shall urge acceptance upon my government once again. I shall notify you when I have heard a final decision from them. In the meantime, Colonel Burr, you must call upon me if I can be of assistance to you in any other enterprise." He paused in order to give Burr an opportunity to say farewell, but Burr merely sat quietly in his chair, almost as though he did not comprehend that the minister was trying to tell him he no longer had hope, as though he believed that the next words from the minister would be favorable. When Burr gave no sign of leaving, Mr. Merry said apologetically, "I fear I must now resume those dull tasks once more. Good day, Mr. Burr." He turned and left Aaron Burr alone in the room with his thoughts. Burr remained lost in contemplation until the butler appeared to usher him from the legation.

Aaron Burr was stunned. It had not seemed even remotely possible that the British Government might refuse his request, yet it appeared that very thing had happened. It was a severe blow and would be a major setback to his time schedule. But by the time Aaron Burr was again returned to his rooms, he was resigned to the loss of British support and determined to put forth his best efforts to secure the ships and money from other sources.

Through the winter of 1805 and 1806 he increased his efforts to raise men and money for his enterprise. Having failed to raise the support of Britain, he approached the minister from Spain, Marquis de Casa Yrujo. The marquis was quite favorably impressed by Colonel Burr and his proposal, and wrote his government to that effect:

"For one who does not know the country, this plan would appear almost insane . . . but I confess . . . it seems to me easy to execute, although it will irritate the Atlantic States . . . It is beyond question that there exists in this country an infinite number of adventurers, without property, full of ambition and ready to unite at once under the standard of a revolution, which promises to better their lot. Equally certain is it that Burr and his friends, without discovering their true object, have succeeded in getting the good will of these men and inspiring the greatest confidence among them in favor of Burr."

The indication of approval from the marquis gratified Burr, but he was not willing again to allow himself the vulnerability of being completely refused without having an alternative plan under way.

Partly as a result of the influence of Damon Aarons, and partly because he suspected that if an appropriate plan were presented in just the right way, the wealthy rice-planter friends of Joseph and Theodosia would willingly lend their spare capital to his scheme—it mattered very little to Damon Aarons which was more important—Aaron Burr at last decided to visit his daughter in South Carolina.

He arrived in February and found Joseph and Theodosia at their home in The Oaks.

As he anticipated, Theodosia was beside herself with joy at his arrival.

"Oh, papa, how I have longed to see you," she said, embracing him as though she would never again release him.

"And how I longed for you to share my travels through the West, my dearest Theodosia. It would have been most beneficial for your health, I'm certain. Joseph," he addressed his son-in-law, "I am determined to take Theodosia with me on my next trip to the Western states. Do not deny me that privilege—and little Gampy, too." He leaned down to rumple the small boy's curly hair as his grandson embraced him about the leg. "And you must come, too, if you can manage the time. The people are more hospitable than even I wrote you. But, you understand, I did not wish to fill you with too much envy at my great pleasure."

Later that evening, as he and Joseph indulged in the gentlemanly practice of smoking "ceegars" with a glass of wine, Theodosia sat beside her father and listened carefully as he described the island in the middle of the Ohio River and Margaret Blennerhasset, its beauteous and surprisingly cultured mistress.

"I have yet to meet her husband, Harman Blennerhasset, but I have been assured that he is an extremely well-educated and talented man, given to the study of astronomy and science, and a very gifted violinist, as well," he told them.

"How strange to find that there are people of such culture in the West, Colonel," said Joseph.

"Did you think that your South Carolina had a priority on refinement and social graces, Joseph?" Burr asked, his tone one of amusement and irony. "Then you know little of the rest of the country."

"That is true enough, Colonel Burr," Joseph replied, "but I had thought the West to be filled with frontiersmen in rough clothing."

"So it is for some, but certainly not for most," Burr told him. "You, too, must find the time to make the trip to this little island with me when I return."

"When will that be, father?" Theodosia wondered.

"This summer, I should think. Mrs. Blennerhasset is most anxious to make your acquaintance, my dear.

Among her other accomplishments, it seems that she's an excellent horsewoman, and I warrant you would enjoy riding with her. I am, myself, convinced that you would find a stay on the island most beneficial. Mr. Blennerhasset has a lavish supply of books which line his library, and you will be able to continue to improve your mind as well. For us, Joseph, there is a superbly stocked wine cellar—how would that please you?" He beamed at his son-in-law.

"Oh, father, how I long to see it. I will make certain that I am well enough to travel before your next visit to the island," Theodosia told him.

"There is a spa of some fine repute not far distant from the island, a charming place, and the waters are said to be exceptionally beneficial. We shall visit the springs to take advantage of the cure for you, daughter. I desire to see you dancing at a great ball in the Blennerhasset mansion," he answered her.

"Oh father, how grand," she replied with a laugh.

"In no way half so grand as your future in our empire, my dearest, when you and Joseph shall lead every ball, every dance, and partake of every festivity," he promised.

"How does your enterprise advance, sir?" Joseph inquired.

"Quite well, Joseph. I am pleased with the progress. There was a rather sizable financial setback, but I believe I have overcome that at present. It is again moving forward."

"I am pleased to hear that, Colonel. This project is especially intriguing in its scope," Joseph replied.

"And papa is the only man of our acquaintance capable of conceiving it, Joseph," said a proud Theodosia.

"How long will you remain with us this visit, Colonel?" his son-in-law wondered.

"Only a few days do I dare tarry in your company here, Joseph. I have many unraveled details which I must weave together before I am able to depart once more for the West."

They sat without speaking for a few minutes, the two men savoring their cegars. Theodosia, who sat at her father's feet like a schoolgirl with her head resting on his

knee, silently enjoyed the company of the two men she loved most dearly. They were together, the three of them, so seldom now. During the past few months, when he was away from them, she yearned for her father with a longing urgency of which she did not realize she was capable. At times her need for him seemed to border on panic; but always, somehow, she was able to bring herself back to the realization that her proper place was with Joseph and that her father would visit them again at his convenience. She attributed this new desperation to her ill health and felt that her father would not approve of the frightening sentimentality to which she occasionally gave way. So she refrained from mentioning it to him now. Percy Brooks, however, understood her frightened, desperate yearning for Damon Aarons and realized that, although she had tried resolutely to control her own emotions, she was mainly responsible for much of Theodosia's unnatural behavior. During the course of the year, however, she had learned to manage her new situation rather well, she thought. She had achieved an understanding so that she no longer was forced to retreat into Theodosia's subconscious mind to survive. She had found the ability to coexist and still remain aware of her surroundings, allowing Theodosia to act and react in her normal manner. Her relief and pleasure at seeing Damon Aarons once again caused her to cling to him lest he slip away too soon.

After a time, Burr spoke. "I have a new undertaking in mind, Joseph, I believe also will be of some interest to you. While on my travels through the West, I became aware of a tract of land on the Washita River in Louisiana. It is known as the Bastrop Grant—a tract of something like a million acres, ceded by the Spaniards to the Baron Bastrop, and now in the main owned by a Colonel Charles Lynch, who resides in Lexington. It is my hope to purchase some four hundred thousand acres of this land. I mean to gather about me a colony, made up of volunteers, who would be interested in settling and developing the land. This Washita land would form the new society of which we spoke the last time. In this manner, should the attempt to establish an empire in Mexico not materialize for some unknown reason, we could turn our thoughts

and energies to creating a colony on the Washita based on the same philosophy. In any event, our future is assured."

"It is always best to have an alternate plan, Colonel Burr. This sounds like an admirable undertaking. How far have you advanced in the consummation of this enterprise?" Joseph inquired.

"Before anything can go forward, I must raise the money for the undertaking. I have assurances that I will be able to purchase the land, and certain good and able men have expressed a desire to accompany me there. I am certain that there will be no difficulty in gathering sufficient numbers to follow once we are underway. The West is full of fine, young men eager to volunteer on behalf of a worthy cause.

"I see," said Joseph.

"I had hoped that you might be able to assist me in persuading some of your neighbors here in South Carolina to invest their money in the undertaking," Burr offered tentatively.

"But of course, he will—won't you, Joseph. And we must be the first to invest so that the others will know we have faith in father's project," Theodosia insisted. "Tomorrow, Joseph, you must invite everyone who can come to a dinner. All the men, that is. It's not necessary to include the wives. I will not be present either. That way, the gentlemen will be more at liberty to discuss the project. Father will be your guest of honor. Oh, papa, I am persuaded that you will be able to raise all the necessary capital you require right here on the Waccamaw River. You may reserve the money from Charleston for your next venture. And if that be so, then you must pledge me that you will remain with us for the rest of the winter." She held his free hand in both of hers and pressed her cheek against it. "I need you so desperately," whispered Percy, but her plea was ill-timed. It was Aaron Burr to whom she spoke, not Damon Arons.

"My dear Theodosia, you have a most loving and sympathetic husband. You have no real need of me at the moment, and I have much preparation to complete. Don't allow yourself the indulgence of self-pity, my dear. It is unbecoming in one so well bred as yourself. But I will not

chastise you over much. You have been ill, and I know that your spirit and body have been weakened by that illness." He did not withdraw the hand which she held to her cheek. There were times when her undisguised adoration touched some inmost soul, as it now did. "When the time is right and all is in readiness, I shall send for you and we shall spend many happy days in retreat on Blennerhasset's island. But I must leave you in a few days only to accomplish that purpose."

By the time the evening drew to a close, Joseph had given himself wholeheartedly to the new scheme. It was much safer and appeared to be more secure than the one previously proposed by his father-in-law. With conviction, he threw himself into the task of persuading his friends and certain neighbors of the feasibility of the plan and actually succeeded in raising a goodly portion of the money required.

Percy bided her time as patiently as she could, and the opportunity to speak with Damon Arons came at last on the night before his departure. Father and daughter were walking on the lawn in front of The Oaks when Damon Arons stopped abruptly and put his hands on her shoulders.

"Percy, I must talk to you," he said forcefully but quietly. There was no need to alarm her, in the event that Theodosia refused to allow her to speak to him.

Theodosia's eyes widened with fear at this unexpected move and the sound of an unfamiliar name. But only for a moment, then the fear dissolved into confusion and bewilderment, and finally he saw her eyes shine with recognition and relief.

"Damon, oh Damon. I was afraid you would leave without seeking me out," Percy told him in a rush.

"It has not been an easy time for me these past several months, Percy. I wished greatly to come to you, but the mind of Aaron Burr is so totally absorbed in his plotting and intriguing at the moment that he rarely relaxes long enough to allow me an opportunity to seek prominence. His mind has been so full of securing Joseph's assistance that I've not been able to reach out to you on this visit."

"Damon, I'm frightened. I've tried to follow your ad-

vice, and to a certain degree I've succeeded. Days pass of which I'm not even aware—weeks, too, I think. It almost seems that I'm living at an entirely different rate of time from Theodosia. I try not to be alarmed by it all, but sometimes I am," she confessed.

"Yes, I share the same feeling about time, Percy. But you will survive only if you remain calm." The pitifully haunted expression in her eyes made him reach for her and draw her close in a comforting embrace. She was warm and yielding, her body pressed closely against his. The comfort he meant to give to her, she returned to him.

"Please don't leave me alone so soon, Damon. I don't think I can bear to be without you to comfort me. Couldn't we leave now? Couldn't we go back right now? I'm ready, Damon. Please," she begged.

"Percy, the risk is so great. Burr's mind is so vital. It would be a gamble."

"I'm willing to take the gamble with you, Damon," she replied.

"Then we'll try, Percy," he told her. "Stand here and face me. Let me have both your hands, and close your eyes." She did as he instructed. "Now, place your thoughts in mine. Let your mind wander from you and come to me. Don't be afraid to release it. You must trust me, Percy. I'll be very gentle and protective of your mind, but you must let me envelop it. Together we will concentrate our thinking toward the twentieth century; we will exert our thoughts toward our lives in that time. Push your mind toward that purpose and let me carry us through the cycle of time forward to the lives we left unfinished there . . ."

Percy could feel a lightening of spirit, a warm thrill of anticipation, falling over her. She redoubled her efforts to impel her mind toward Damon.

"Relax . . . relax . . . relax . . . and drift with me. Can you feel that it is beginning? Our minds are receding from these borrowed bodies . . . drifting . . . moving away. Don't hold back, Percy, let go . . . let go . . . don't let anything disturb . . . frighten you . . . Together we . . . we . . . we're moving away . . ."

And they were. They were moving, floating through space and time, drifting through the elements. Percy felt herself releasing the weight of her physical being, rising freely and effortlessly, her thoughts entwined and supported by Damon's will. A misty fog welled and swirled above them, and they were mounting into it together. She wanted to speak, to assure Damon that she could sense the beginning, that she was somehow aware they were embarking on their return, but she was unable to speak. She was losing control of the physical functions and was without power to utilize any voice, only mind. It was increasingly easy to release more and more of her will to Damon's own. Her confidence in him was now complete and her trust without question. Slowly she let herself move toward him, thought by thought, in a continuous stream.

Damon felt their return was now assured. Her confidence bolstered his own. It was only a matter of completing what they had set in motion, and they would be free of their imprisonment in another century.

Suddenly there was an abrupt and violent wrenching, which Damon could not ignore, try as he might. He found that he was struggling to exist, gasping for breath. His body seemed to be held in a viselike grip, making him sharply aware of his physical being, the very thing which he was trying to avoid. In desperation he strained to ignore the pressure being exerted against him. In the distance was a minute pinpoint speck of light toward which he knew he must propel their minds. Even as he concentrated on the tiny spot of light, he was blinded by a blast of glaring brilliance directly in front of him, a brilliance so dazzling that he could not avoid its intensity. And with the light came a searing pain surging through his whole being until he felt that he would explode into millions of atoms. He realized that again Burr had mastered him and would not release his hold. To continue would mean the destruction of both of them. He must retreat.

But Burr could not control Percy. She must advance alone. She had come far enough that she could complete the transfer under her own sensitive powers.

"You must continue the trip by yourself now, Percy. You are free." He let go of her hands. "Continue. You have begun, and you will succeed. The remainder is for you to accomplish, and you can. You must. You have the ability, Percy, and I now will your mind back to you. Don't be afraid. Take it, receive it. You have entered a timeless void, and on the other end you will find your own life in your own time. Accept your mind and advance."

Percy was aware that she was surrounded by darkness, a void of blackness, which seemed to extend without barriers in all directions around her, but a small pinpoint speck of light was evident in the far distance, and she knew that she must exert her efforts toward that small beam of brightness. Somehow her sensitivity perceived that something was faulty, something was amiss. She had lost touch with Damon. She could perceive him nowhere in the blackness which circled her. He was gone, vanished. Nothing of him could she summon. She was frightened, and her fright increased as she became aware of a pain throbbing and searing in her brain. She knew that pain would increase if she continued to advance toward the light, and she knew that she would not find Damon waiting there. He should be here somewhere, with her, beside her, around her, somewhere here! She must find him. She must retreat and find him. They had become separated in the blackness and she could not force herself to advance alone and leave him here. Slowly, slowly, the darkness began to recede and melt into a gray fog until at last she opened her eyes to find that she was in the garden of The Oaks with Damon beside her; he was clutching his arms and his body was wracked by a great shuddering.

"Damon. Damon," she cried, grabbing his arms in an effort to calm him. She found that she was shaking as she clung to him. "Why did you leave me?" she asked plaintively. "You know that I couldn't go back without you. Now that I have found you, I could never leave you here."

"Oh, Percy, why? Why didn't you return? Why did you come back to seek me out?" he asked futilely.

"When I return you must be with me. I couldn't let you sacrifice yourself to an eternity in a life that isn't your

own. You once told me that you needed a cause to pull you, a magnet to draw you back to your own time. You told me I was that cause, Damon. I can't go back unless you do," she told him. "Why did you return?"

"It's Burr. He is too full of this great enterprise to allow me to spoil it by depriving him of the use of my body. When I tried to engage him in a struggle for supremacy, as I was returning, it was my will that was being destroyed in the attempt, not his. The brilliance, the genius of the man is awesome, Percy. And most awesome of all, I fear, is the man's all-consuming ambition, which he is determined shall be fulfilled this time. I dread that unbridled ambition may be his destruction . . . and possibly mine. I don't know what history reports was the outcome of this enterprise, and I can't say whether or not he can change the course of recorded events. I only know that he is obstinate in his resolve that he will this time achieve his goal. Since you are bound to share my fate with me, for the moment, we must struggle to survive, you and I. I regret more than I can tell you, my dear, that I have involved you in this terrifying venture."

"No, Damon, you must not blame yourself. That's not true. It was Angie who first involved you. She was my sister, and therefore it's only right that I should try to give you the same help you unquestioningly gave her. But I fear I've only complicated matters for you. I've given you an added worry, and I seem powerless to help you. But you must promise me something. Since your situation is so difficult, if the opportunity should arise for you to escape while we're apart . . . promise me that you will. It was my own risk to come back in time. I didn't realize that it would be like this, but I didn't ask what problems there might be, either. Quite possibly I might not survive, but that mustn't be your concern. Please, promise me," she begged, her voice choked with tears.

Damon Aarons fought against the overpowering fondness for the young woman he took into his arms. It was an unnatural feeling, he realized, aroused because she was so helpless and pitiful in her confusion, coupled with the equally unnatural affection between Aaron Burr and Theodosia—their other selves—but also, in part because she

herself was so lovely, so charming, and so eager for his welfare. They were in a time set apart, apart from their other lives in their own time in the twentieth century, divided from her husband and children, separated from the world of reality. There were only the two of them at the moment, and they clung to each other in desperate need, sharing a mutual tenderness and affection.

"Percy, my dear, if we ever return, we must return together. I can't bring myself to leave you in this life alone, especially after the sacrifice you made for me. And I doubt very much if I should find this life bearable without you now that I have known you here," he murmured to her. "But I wonder what we are to make of this tender feeling if we do return. Will we remember it as sweetly as it is at the moment . . . will we carry it with us? And if we do, will it destroy us . . . or those around us . . . if we let it grow?"

"I have you with me now, Damon. I cannot think of any other time. I only know that this has brought us closer together," she answered.

"Yet, you must find the strength to continue as you have been, my dear, until Burr sends for his daughter to join him on the island. I know that he then intends to keep her with him. That is a time we can share together. When we are apart, you must try to conquer this feeling, and so must I. I know that we can't remain in this time forever. We must make another attempt to return. Perhaps that can be managed on the island when Burr is most likely to be so confident of success that he relaxes his vigilance. If we are able to proceed with the necessary speed, it's possible that we can be returned before he's aware of it. Do you think you can manage until then?"

"If it means that we can be together for a length of time, I'll use that hope to guide me, and I'll somehow find a way to survive. Though I'm frightened at times, Damon, Theodosia's ill health leaves me as weak as she is. I often wonder if my own body is ill wherever it is. Even when she's weak, there are times when I can't find the strength to overcome her mind. But if you promise me that we can be together, I'll promise you that I will somehow manage until then."

"Dear Percy! What can I say to you? As pleased as I am to find you here, I am equally sorry to see you suffer this distress. I can sense that the return is urgent, but I'm powerless at the moment to accomplish it," he told her. He felt her shiver slightly in his embrace and realized that the air had grown chilly and she should return to the house for the sake of her health.

The summer dragged along with an exchange of letters between father and daughter but no summons to join him on the island. Aaron Burr was experiencing unexpected difficulty in raising the final sums of money necessary to begin his campaign. He had been able to secure a substantial portion from private individuals but not all, as yet.

Suddenly, with no warning, in the middle of the summer of 1806, certain events began to occur which made it possible for Aaron Burr to consider springing into action with what resources were at hand, hoping to gather the remainder along the way. It seemed that the propitious time had arrived, and he must seize the opportunity it presented if success was to be within his grasp.

A growing dispute flamed between the United States and Spain, forcing the peace-loving Thomas Jefferson to send the army into the field in order to repel an advance of Spanish troops from Mexico should they decide to cross the border. Burr was certain this was the beginning of the long-anticipated war with Spain for which he had so patiently waited. He immediately sent a long and flattering letter to his friend General Wilkinson in which he urged Wilkinson to put into operation their plan to gather troops and march into Mexico. He himself would follow with additional recruits, and from there the states which were ready to secede from the Union would throw their lots in on the side of the new empire. He hoped to be able to make Blennerhasset Island the rendezvous point for his recruits, and when all was in readiness, move from there into Mexico. He also dispatched a letter to Theodosia—that letter for which she had waited so long—urging her, together with Joseph and little "Gamp," to join him on the island for what he hoped would be the fruition of their dream. When it was revealed to the recruits that their destination was Mexico, those who objected to the mission

could still be dispatched to settle a colony on the Bastrop Tract. His time had surely come!

Theodosia was distraught when she received the letter. Joseph was confined to his bed with an attack of the "ague" and it was out of the question for him to undertake the journey. Her place was with him to nurse him back to health as he so often did for her. But Joseph protested that she must go in advance with little "Gamp" and he would follow as soon as his present indisposition was improved enough for him to travel. She needed little persuasion, for she was eager to join her father. As soon as she was able to arrange it, she and Gampy set forth for Blennerhasset's island in the Ohio River.

The island proved to be as much the charming retreat as her father promised she would find it. Harman and Margaret Blennerhasset were completely captivated with the charm of Theodosia. Daily, Margaret and Theo donned their colorful riding habits and rode across the island. The weather was favorable, and Theodosia blossomed as her health improved.

Harman's imagination expanded at the thought of becoming a major personality in Colonel Burr's new empire, and it took merely a small suggestion on Burr's part to win the approval of using the island to house men and supplies, as well as to win Blennerhasset's financial support. In his own spellbinding way, Aaron Burr drew for them a verbal picture of the new country which he fully expected to found, be it an empire in Mexico or a settlement on the banks of the Washita River, for in his mind the country already flourished.

After dinner one evening, as they were seated in the drawing room, Burr rose to his feet, and crossing the room to a bottle of fine, aged French brandy, he poured a small glass for each of them, which he then distributed with great ceremony. When each was holding a glass, he raised his own and said, "I drink to our future empire. Long may it flourish!" He downed his brandy and watched the others follow his example, a satisfied smile on his face. At the urging of Harman, he began to explain again the establishment of his country. It was a subject he dearly loved to discuss with this particular gathering.

"I, of course, shall be the Emperor or King, and Theodosia will be Princess. Joseph will become Emperor after my demise, and after him, of course, Aaron Burr Alston, little Gampy, will become Emperor Aaron II. But I will not rule my country as a despot. I do not believe that will be the way to win the hearts and allegiance of my subjects. On the contrary, my nation will be an autocracy—a benevolent autocracy. There will be a parliament to assist me, and it will be founded on what might be properly termed a 'true democratic' basis. The chief advisers will sit in a house of peers. But their seats will not be awarded them because of wealth or position or power. Their achievements must be such as to win them their places, and it is my fervent hope that philosophers and teachers, authors and artists, along with distinguished statesmen, diplomats, and soldiers will be gathered together to discuss and formulate laws. In fact, I think, it might be wise to offer inducements to the prominent men of other lands in order to persuade them to join us in our new kingdom, where they might find the encouragement and opportunity, freedom, and wealth for their work and thought which they may lack in their present country.

"There will, quite naturally, also be a lower house of parliament. That one will be made up of representatives elected by the citizens of the country. Their powers would be limited mostly to offering advice to myself and my cabinet. It will serve rather as a sounding board for ideas and not principally a lawmaking body.

"We will be a nation of culture and high morals, of opportunity, of peace, and of freedom. It will, in short, be the Utopia for which men have always searched. And in time it will grow and strengthen and prosper to become a major power among the countries of the earth." He paused for breath, and the spellbound audience immediately burst into enthusiastic applause. Blennerhasset sprang to his feet and rushed forward to grasp Burr's hand, pumping it with gusto.

"Splendid, splendid, Colonel Burr. What a magnificent vision! How you must long to be about the establishment of such a country. I, for one, am honored to be a part of

your aspirations. And I implore you, my dear sir, to grant me a title. I should like that very much."

"Of course you must have a title, my dear Harman. How would Minister to England please you? Then you could return to your home country with enviable honors. Your wife shall become first lady in waiting to the Princess, if that position might please her." He inclined his head in the direction of Margaret, who was seated beside Theo. She responded with a delighted smile and as much of a curtsy as she could muster from her seated position.

By the middle of September 1806, Blennerhasset Island had taken on the aspect of an armed camp rather than a peaceful island retreat, although the information which had been given to those curious enough to ask was that the men housed there were those frontiersmen who had volunteered to settle the land along the Washita River, who carried their own muskets both for safety in the wilderness and for hunting game. Two hundred of them there were, more or less, and their ranks grew daily. Under the watchful eye of Colonel Burr they daily drilled with muskets and fired the three cannons that somehow had been bestowed on the island. Blennerhasset had silos built for the corn and wheat and for storing the jerked beef and dried fish, which seemed to be arriving on the island almost without interruption. There was an arsenal, which had in former days been a barn for the Blennerhasset, but now held lead and bags of gunpowder. Armed guards stood sentry duty day and night to protect the provisions stored there.

Promptly at noon each day, the garrison paraded under the discerning eye of their future emperor, his daughter, and grandson. Little Aaron was beginning to enjoy watching the men march past him and took great pride in saluting them in perfect imitation of his grandfather. Everything was in order and merely awaited the formal declaration of war with Spain. Aaron Burr had never felt more secure about his future, but he was growing restless and impatient to embark on his enterprise. He busied himself with the important matter of gathering together boats with which to begin the journey.

It seemed that there was no time for Damon to be alone with Percy. Theodosia was young and strong and constantly accompanied by either little "Gamp" or Margaret or both; and he was always in the company of one of his men or being followed about by Harman Blennerhasset. The privacy he had anticipated was denied them.

Early one morning, well before dawn, Damon Aaron's tiptoed into Theodosia's room and gently touched her on the shoulder. She rolled her head to the opposite side of the pillow and sighed deeply. He shook her slightly, and her eyes slowly fluttered open. The sight of him startled her, but she did not make a sound. She glanced cautiously at the bed where little "Gamp" was sleeping the sleep of an innocent child.

"What is it, father?" she whispered.

"Dress quickly, dear child, and come to the dock. I want to talk with you in private." Damon was disappointed that it was Theodosia who responded, not Percy.

"Must it be so early? Surely it could wait until after we have eaten," she protested.

"Do not be such a lazy slug-a-bed, child. It is urgent. It can wait no longer," he insisted. He was tempted to call her by the name of "Percy" but feared that it might alarm her unduly. And he was sure he could rouse the Percy in her once they were engaged in conversation.

"As soon as you leave the room, I will dress and meet you," she agreed. "Only now go. I don't wish for Gampy to waken at this hour."

Burr retreated from the room and made his way stealthily down the stairs and out of the house, welcoming the fresh early-morning air on his way to the dock. He wanted to be as far from the occupants of the house as possible so they would have a chance to talk at length without interruption. Now was the time that he had set upon to try to attempt their escape. It must be now before Burr's campaign got underway, and it must be this morning, very early, while Burr was still not fully alert. He didn't feel that it was safe to attempt their return in the same manner as previously. It must be other than submitting her will to his in the event that Burr drew him back again; she must continue on unhindered. It might be, in

fact he was almost certain that it would be, their only opportunity for such an effort before Burr began his campaign. Burr's mind was so full of twists and turns that Damon was no longer precisely certain what action he was about to undertake—whether it related to Mexico or the Bastrop Tract. But whatever the undertaking, he had no desire to be a part of it. Still, he had to admire the uncanny brilliance of the man's mind. He wrote letters to many different correspondents and with great frequency. He wrote to each in an elaborately devised code designated for that person alone, and the key to each code he kept in his head. He committed to paper not a single clue to any of the keys, and he never became confused about them. His will was incredibly strong, but Damon Aarons pushed the thought of it from his mind with a determined resolve. He didn't wish to think about the mind of Aaron Burr. That would merely aid Burr to regain control, and it was difficult already for Damon to find even a moment when he might suppress the mind of the other long enough to even consider his own future course. That was why he had chosen a moment when Burr was drowsy with sleep—the struggle, if at all, would be less intense. Burr was very tired from the strain of the past few weeks on the island and would have welcomed another hour or two of sleep this morning, and so Damon had wakened Percy, or at least, he hoped the young woman approaching him would be Percy. As she recognized him, she began to run across the lawn. Yes, he assured himself. It was Percy. He could tell by her eagerness to greet him.

He took her by the hand as she approached him, and together they walked to the edge of the water.

"Percy, are you thoroughly alert?" he asked.

"Why, of course, Damon. What a question to ask me. I am here, isn't that proof enough?" she replied.

"Good. I only wanted to be certain of it. I also wanted to know that I wasn't talking with Theodosia. It would complicate matters unnecessarily and totally confound that young lady. I have tried on three occasions to bring you out, but without any success. I knew then that Theodosia was well and strong and happy. Burr has been also, and that has made it impossible to communicate with you.

I suppose I should have expected it, but I didn't think it would be difficult for both of us."

"Yes, I know, Damon. And I seem never to be alone here on this island. On those few occasions I've tried to approach you, someone has interrupted before I was able to reach you," she agreed. "Damon," she began reluctantly, "does that mean that we won't be able to return now either? I wouldn't object to remaining here with you, you know that surely."

"Percy, don't speak of it. It has taken some strong determination on my part, but I realize that the only course of action is to make every effort to return to our own lives. When that is accomplished, then we will face whatever problems arise, but without the interference of Aaron Burr and Theodosia. If we are to have a future together, it must be as us, without their close relationship to influence us in any way."

She nodded her head. He was right, of course. "When, Damon?" she asked simply.

"If you're willing to try, Percy, I think we should make an effort now. This is the time to return—if we can." His voice was steady and calm and sure.

She whirled about to face him squarely. She had wanted to return as soon as he said yes, but now—now, this very minute—she had been allowed no time to prepare, no final embrace. She hadn't expected it to be now. He sensed her indecision and took her arm in order to give her some of his strength.

"It would be best to try it now, Percy, before either of us has time to reconsider and before any one else on the island is about. If we are to hope for success, it must be when we're alone and clear-headed. Trust me," he told her.

"Yes, completely, Damon. I do trust you." She nodded her head. "If you believe this is the right time, then I'm prepared to try with you."

"Good, Percy. Now, remember that you must think only of your own life in your own time. This time I want you to hold your mind to yourself. Don't yield it up to me. We'll try together but separately. It would be much easier if we could make physical contact with something

from that life to draw us toward it like a magnet, but that's not essential. You must not let anything interfere with your concentration, nothing from this time must prevent you from thinking of your other life. Let me see, what should we focus on in unison? Not the house or anything on the island. It must be something impersonal like the trees or the sky or"—glancing about him—"or the river . . ." His eye was caught by the sunlight reflecting on the rippling waves of the river in front of them. Yes, it could be hypnotic, and the moving water was as timeless as the universe . . . without beginning, without end, merely moving forever in a steady repetitious pattern. It was the same before the country was born and would be the same in their own time.

"Listen carefully, Percy. We're going to stand together here at the water's edge and watch the endless motion of the river. It will have a hypnotic effect. Let go of your mind. Let it float on top of the river. Let it free to float carried along on the waves down the river and into the twentieth century back to your own life. Think of your own life, of your own family, your own time. As your mind is transported along by the water, think of those you love and place them before you. Let go of your mind and release it from its surroundings here." They stood hand in hand on the river's edge staring at the surface of the water. Percy's face was peaceful, tranquil, she was letting go of her will.

"Concentrate on our century, our time . . . you and I are now going to leave this place, this time, these bodies, and travel forward, forward, forward to live the lives that are ours." Damon's voice was low, steady, rhythmic. It had a persuasive, lulling quality to it which encouraged Percy to relax. The dancing, sparkling ripples seemed to grow more brilliant and to flow and meld together. They were forming a web, a netting to support her, to gently carry her back to the twentieth century. She was floating along on top of them as they rushed together into one enormous wave, one magnificent brilliant blinding whiteness which seemed to be swallowing her, pulling her into it. There was a rush of wind as in a storm and a numbness flowed through her very being until she could feel no body,

no flesh, only a light floating as though she were a cloud drifting on the water. Suddenly through the emptiness around her came a crashing pain which struck with the fierceness of a bolt of lightning. She summoned all her ebbing strength, thrust both hands to her head and screamed in agony.

"NNNNNOOOOOOOOOO. NNNOOOOOOOOOO!"

Through his hollow vacuum, Damon Aarons experienced intense pain, his eyes seemed to be focused but he could not see. He was determined this time to ignore the pain, the result of the desperate struggle of the will of Aaron Burr. The pain was not so intense this time as it had been in the past, and he was determined to push beyond it, to struggle to thrust it behind him and to strive for the other side of the pain where he would be forever free from the will of Aaron Burr. This time I won't fail you, Percy. This time I won't fail you, he kept thinking to himself, as he persisted, and when he believed that he was past the worst of the pain, on the verge of emerging on the far side of this time, he was pulled back suddenly by the anguished cry of someone in pain, pain almost beyond bearing. For a moment he was tempted to ignore the cry, not to let it distract him from his purpose, to emerge safely as his true self in his true time, but the cry would not let him be. It seemed to haunt him, to pull at him. Again it sounded.

"NNNNNNNOOOOOOOOOOO!"

It was a cry he couldn't ignore, couldn't block from his mind, so desperate was its urgency. He released his mind and allowed it to swiftly return to the riverbank and the nineteenth century. As his eyes became adjusted to the surroundings, he realized why he had been unable to complete his transfer through time. The scream had come from Percy, who stood beside him, both hands pressed tightly to her head. She was a soul in anguish.

"NOOOOOOO. No. No. I can't do it. I can't. The pain . . . my head, my head. . . OOOOOHHHHHH . . . the pain! I can't go back to that pain. I won't go back. I won't." She was sobbing hysterically. For a moment he was able to pull loose her hands and to glimpse the torture in her eyes before she fell unconscious, limp and crumpled

in his arms. Tenderly, he picked up her inert young form and carried her slowly back to the manor house. Once he stopped and placed his ear close to her face to make certain that she was still breathing. Her breathing seemed to be so shallow that there was no visible trace of it at all.

"Forgive me, Percy," he whispered, holding her face close to his as he kissed it gently. "I never meant for you to suffer."

It took a few moments for him to realize what had happened, but it was beginning to be clearer to him. He, too, had experienced pain during the process of transferring, but nothing so agonizing as that which had caused Percy to faint—and when they seemed about to emerge on the other side of time. Pain of that intensity could not have been the result of the transfer at that stage. It must have been from some other cause. It was something she was going into rather than something she was coming out of. It was something she was experiencing on the other side. It was obviously the reason Percy did not remember how she had managed the transfer. She had probably been taken ill or been injured, and the damage or blow or illness was centered in her head. That was where the pain seemed to be concentrated. That would also explain what was happening to her own body while she was with him. But now that he realized it, he was presented with an even more difficult predicament than merely being displaced in time. There was no way for him to know how serious the illness was. Might she even be in danger of dying? Was it possible that, with her mind in this century instead of her own, the doctors might think her already dead? How could he tell? More than ever it was urgent to return immediately . . . But how could he force Percy to face the pain of her life in the twentieth century? How could he force her to endure it? Yet he must have her cooperation in order to return them both. It was urgent that he gain that cooperation and find the method to transfer them both without a great delay.

As he reached the front porch of the house, Margaret Blennerhasset ran forward to meet him.

"Did she fall? Is she injured, Colonel Burr. What happened?" she questioned.

"Theodosia fainted as we were walking by the dock, Mrs. Blennerhasset. I'll carry her up to bed. Don't concern yourself. I'm certain she'll be recovered and quite herself in a day or two," he replied

CHAPTER XIII

It was not more than a few minutes after five-thirty in the morning. As usual, the intensive-care unit of the hospital in Charleston was brightly lit, even at that hour. The nurse sat at her desk reading a book and listening to a portable radio playing quietly. This was always the bad time of her schedule. It was an in-between time, past the time for medication to be administered and not yet time to begin a round of checking patients or temperature readings. There were no new patients requiring constant busy attention, and she had a few minutes to sit at the desk and relax. Only in these rare moments of ease did the night duty in the ward ever bother her. Now was the time she felt tired and longed for a comfortable bed so she could indulge in a short nap. But she knew the feeling wouldn't last long. In little more than half an hour—sometime after six—she would begin a round of checking on patients, replacing IV bottles or adding medication to the fluid, checking on other medication that was needed along with the necessary supplies for administering the morning round of shots. Then there would follow the overseeing of the daily morning routine of the unit. But at the moment, all was quiet, the patients were sleeping, some soundly, some fitfully, but sleeping nonetheless, and so she relaxed.

The quiet of the room around her amplified Percy's piercing scream of pain by the sharpness of contrast. It was so startling and unexpected that the nurse dropped her book. She was on her feet immediately, but the sound had taken her so much by surprise that for an instant she wasn't able to make up her mind which of the patients had

made the noise. Before she had time to decide, the scream came again. This time she was expecting it, and there was no mistaking where it came from. It was Mrs. Brooks who had screamed. The nurse hurried to her bed and pulled aside the curtain. There was Percy, trying to raise her head from the bed and struggling to tear off the bandages. Her eyes were wide open, staring into space, and she was screaming shrilly. As near as the nurse could make out, she was shrieking "NNNNOOOOOO!" She seemed to be babbling something about the pain in her head. Before the nurse could reach her, she began to flail both hands about in frustration; failing to tear the bandage from her head, she began to tear at the air around her. She was in a fit of hysterical sobbing. Her left arm was still strapped to a board to protect the intravenous needle and the bottle as well as the stand began to sway precariously. The nurse grabbed for it frantically, barely in time to prevent it from falling to the floor. She set it right, steadied the bottle, and spoke in a calming voice to Percy.

"What is it, Mrs. Brooks? What's the matter," she asked, firmly grasping Percy's thrashing arms.

"The pain, the pain . . . in my head," Percy said, sobbing.

The nurse gently settled Percy's arms on the bed. "Please, Mrs. Brooks, try to sleep. The pain will go away if you sleep."

"No. I can't stand it. Make it go away. I can't stand it anymore," Percy pleaded.

"It will go away, Mrs. Brooks. In time it will go away," the nurse said patiently. Long ago she made up her mind that the only way for her to survive all the suffering she had to witness in the intensive-care unit was not to allow herself to become personally involved with the misery of the patients. She had to remain detached from their suffering in order not to share that suffering with them.

With some difficulty, Percy began to focus her eyes on her surroundings. At last she discovered the source of the voice, and she blinked her eyes several times as she struggled to see the nurse clearly.

"Who . . . who are you?" she asked.

"I'm Miss Clarkson, the night nurse," she answered.

"It's very early in the morning, Mrs. Brooks. Go back to sleep." The nurse busied herself with unwrapping Percy's arm from the board. She had to make certain the IV needle was still in place. If it had been pulled loose, she would have to start it again.

"What . . . what are you doing?" Percy wanted to know.

"I'm checking to see if the IV is all right. Don't worry, Mrs. Brooks. Why don't you try to sleep?" she encouraged Percy. Again Percy lifted her hands to ease the pain in her head. "No, don't move your arm," said Miss Clarkson taking hold of it. "There, just let it rest right there. Now don't move." As she suspected, the IV needle had been pulled loose. It didn't seem to be a result of Percy's sudden movement, however. Somehow it had managed to work its way out of the vein, as often happened, and the slow drip of the glucose fluid had infiltrated the arm. As soon as it was no longer confined by the tight wrapping of the bandage which held it to the board, the arm began to swell. She would have to get a new needle and start the IV again in the other arm.

"Go back to sleep, Mrs. Brooks. I'll be back in a few minutes," she said as she started to move away.

"Please help me. The pain. Please give me something for the pain in my head," Percy begged. "I can't bear it."

"You've had all the medication you're allowed, Mrs. Brooks. There's nothing more I can give you. It would be best if you went to sleep and forgot about it. You're not due for another shot for two more hours."

"But my head feels as though it's been split in two. There must be something you can do to help me. Please . . . please, help me." Percy did not complain about illness or pain as a rule, but she had never experienced anything so intensely concentrated in her life. And she felt so totally helpless.

"There's nothing I can do. You might as well stop complaining, Mrs. Brooks. You'll simply have to grit your teeth and learn to live with the pain." The nurse checked to make certain the side railings of Percy's bed were in position to prevent her from climbing or rolling out of bed. They were, and the nurse turned and went to

find the equipment needed to change Percy's IV. This time, she would have to tape the needle in place first to prevent it from infiltrating the other arm, then she would bandage it to the board and tie the board to the bed railing. After all, it was for Percy's own good whether she realized it or not. The nurse placed all the things she needed on the tray, then she remembered Percy's swollen arm. She added to the tray a moist heat pad to wrap around the arm and reduce the swelling. She hoped Percy had managed to fall back into unconsciousness again. The whole process would be much easier for both of them.

She noted with some relief that Percy was again asleep or unconscious. It didn't matter which. Her task would be easier if she didn't have a hysterical patient to calm as she went about it. But, at least they now knew that Percy was alive and could speak. It did not mean that she was definitely on the road to recovery, but it was an encouraging sign. She must remember to make a note of that on the patient's chart as soon as she'd finished this chore.

Percy remained in a restless dozing through the next six hours. Again she began to stir and moan softly. It was close to noon, and the day nurse had been hovering nearby as much as possible through the morning in the hope that she might waken again. The nurse read the chart when she came on duty and she and the doctor had discussed the possibility of Mrs. Brooks recovering consciousness during the day. She wanted to be available in case that happened. As the nurse Mrs. Mallin approached Percy to give her the injection which was due at noon, she was surprised to find Percy lying quietly with her eyes open staring into space. Her first thought was to wonder if the woman was dead, and she firmly grasped a wrist to feel for a pulse. As she did so, Percy moaned softly but remained motionless.

"Mrs. Brooks, can you hear me?" Mrs. Mallin inquired.

Percy gave no sign of response.

"Can you hear me?" Mrs. Mallin inquired.

Again Percy gave no indication that she heard the words.

Mrs. Mallin drew aside the sheet covering Percy and

lifted the blue hospital gown enough to expose the upper part of her thigh and her hip. She rubbed a small area with a cotton pad saturated with alcohol and inserted the needle. Percy gave a small cry of pain as she did so. Quickly Mrs. Mallin replaced the sheet and looked directly into Percy's face.

"Mrs. Brooks, is there something I can do for you? Can you hear me? Can you speak to me?" she asked.

"I hear you," Percy replied weakly.

"That's fine. That's just fine. Would you like to see your husband? He's waiting to see you," Mrs. Mallin said. She had taken a liking to Gordon and felt sorry for him. He waited patiently hour after hour, day after day, to spend a few precious frustrating minutes with his wife, waiting, hoping for word that she was going to recover. If Percy was going to be awake for a few minutes, he should be allowed to see her then.

"He's not here," Percy replied.

"Yes, he is, Mrs. Brooks. He's just outside waiting for you," Mrs. Mallin assured her. "If you promise not to fall asleep again while I'm gone, I'll get him for you."

"He's not here," Percy insisted.

"But he is, Mrs. Brooks," responded the nurse.

Mrs. Mallin did not wait to see if Percy would reply again. She went to summon Gordon and returned a few minutes later with Gordon beside her. He did his best to muster a smile as he leaned over the bed to talk to his wife.

"Hi, honey, how are you feeling?" he asked.

Percy did not reply. She merely lay staring at him with no sign of recognition in her eyes. Gordon put his hand on her arm, as he bent closer to her.

"Honey, it's Gordon, don't you know me?" he asked.

"Who . . . who are you?" Percy inquired, her voice barely loud enough to be heard.

"Why . . . why, I'm Gordon . . . I'm your husband, Percy, don't you know me? Don't you recognize me?" Day after day as he sat in the waiting room, he tried to prepare himself for whatever might happen, but he was not prepared for this. Was it possible that she had lost all memory?

Percy continued to stare at him, her face beginning to twist with pain. The sight of her suffering was too much for Gordon to watch. He looked over his shoulder, hoping to attract the attention of Mrs. Mallin. But she was busy at the other end of the large room and didn't notice. Turning to Percy, he decided to try again.

"Percy," he said, "it's Gordon. It's Gordon. Don't you remember me? Don't you know me?"

"Gordon?" she murmured rather feebly.

"Yes, your husband, Gordon. How do you feel?" he answered, hoping to arouse some reasonable response.

"I can't stay, Gordon. I have to go," she murmured.

"Where, Percy? You can't go anywhere. You've been badly hurt," he replied.

"I must go. I must go back," she answered.

"What do you mean? Where do you want to go, Percy?" Gordon asked.

"I must go back to the island. The pain is too much. I can't stand the pain, and she won't do anything about it. I can't stay here with the pain," Percy insisted.

"Yes, I know it's painful, darling, but they're giving you medicine for it. It'll go away. You'll get better soon, darling," he told her.

"No, I can't stay. I'm going back . . . to the island. Damon is there. He's helping me . . . and the pain is here . . . it makes it so . . . I can't think . . . I don't want to be here with the pain . . . I want the pain to leave," she told him.

"Yes, I know you do, honey, and so do I. I wish I could make the pain go away for good," he replied, taking hold of her hand.

"Damon is there on the island. He's with me. I'm going back to him," she said. "Then the pain won't bother me." Her eyes closed and her face was beginning to relax.

"What island, Percy? What island are you talking about?" Gordon asked.

"The beautiful island. If I go back to him the pain will leave. I won't feel it. I can be happy with him," she said.

"Percy, open your eyes. Percy, what are you talking about? Do you know what you're saying?" Gordon tried to keep his voice level. He didn't want to alarm her, but he didn't want her to slip away from him again.

"I can't talk anymore. I have to go back to Damon . . . I can't . . . see . . . any . . . more . . . too much . . . pain . . . too much . . ." her voice drifted off into a mumble. Gordon sat beside her, listening to her, powerless to hold her. He was more confused than ever. He wished the doctor were somewhere around so he could find out if there was any significance to what Percy was saying. Did she know or was it another hallucination? But the doctor was nowhere in the hospital. He had finished his rounds several hours earlier that morning and was now in his office. Mrs. Mallin was still occupied with a heart patient at the other end of the room and there was no telling when she would be available again. He had barely had the opportunity to say hello to any of the other nurses who were on duty this morning, had not spoken more than a few words to any of them. He didn't feel like discussing Percy's condition with them. He simply had to wait.

The best he could do was to try to decipher the conversation with Percy by himself . . . But what was he to make of it? Had she really found Dr. Aarons? It hardly seemed likely. The nurse kept talking about hallucinations, and Gordon knew that she was probably right. Percy must be dreaming in her unconscious moments, and it was natural, he guessed, that her dream somehow should include Damon Aarons. She had spent so much time concentrating her thoughts on him. In fact, it would be a little bit surprising if she didn't dream of him now. Well, her mind, at least, was active if it could engage in dreams. That should be encouraging. She could talk and she seemed to be able to think. That was encouraging. In fact, it was a lot to be thankful for. Obviously she had talked about a specific dream and a specific island. Gordon couldn't help wondering about what she'd said. She seemed dazed, not really alert when she spoke. He wasn't certain that she even knew what she was saying. Much as he longed to be encouraged about her recovery, he was more nagged by concern than ever.

The rest of the visiting time was spent quietly watching Percy's face and waiting for her to open her eyes again and speak to him. He wanted her to say something more—to explain. She remained sleeping until it was time

for him to return to the waiting room, but once there, he found he was too restless to just sit. He tried to read but didn't seem able to concentrate on the book. He decided what he needed was some food. He closed the book and made his way to the cafeteria. He settled for a sandwich and coffee. The coffee was fresh and hot. It seemed to lift his flagging spirits. How he longed for someone to talk to, someone who would understand the turmoil that was going on in his mind. Suppose, just suppose, that Percy did know what she was saying. What did it mean? That somehow she had found Damon Aarons? What else could it mean? But had she really? Somehow, they were together . . . but were they really? On an island somewhere? What island? . . . Where? . . . But Damon was supposed to have been in the nineteenth century. Could she mean Manhattan Island? But why didn't she say New York if that's what she meant? And what did all this have to do with her chances of recovering? If she recovered, would that mean that Damon Aarons would stay alone on that island, or would he return with her? How could that be? Maybe Percy would decide that the pain she was required to face in her life here and now was too great to bear. Was it possible that she could decide not to return to that pain, and simply live her life back in some previous century while her body lay in a coma until it withered and died? The thought of it made Gordon close his eyes. It couldn't be. Besides, the pain was bound to diminish in time, and besides the thought was preposterous. Gordon shrugged his shoulders. It couldn't happen . . . Still he had seen her when the pain was more than she could stand. She just closed her eyes and slipped away.

Gordon made up his mind very quickly. It would be a help to have Claire or Sam with him for just such a time as this. He needed to talk about it with someone who would accept it for what it was, not someone who would think he had popped his cork. Claire would understand . . . so would Sam. He wasn't able any longer to cope with all the ramifications of the problem he now had to face. Yes, it was ridiculous to even consider it seriously. Yes, it was impossible, yes, she was dreaming it all . . . still . . . he wasn't sure . . . he couldn't be sure. He needed another,

a clearer head than his own to help him keep his balance. He made his way to the nearest phone booth and dialed the operator to place a call to the Whites' home in New York City. He listened as the phone on the other end rang. He waited expectantly, hopefully, but no one picked up the phone. There was no answer. He glanced at his watch as he put the receiver back on the hook. It was one o'clock. He should have known that no one would be home in the middle of the day. Of course they were concerned about Percy, but they had their own everyday lives to lead. He'd have to wait until later to try calling them again. He picked up the receiver a second time and dialed the operator. He didn't know why it hadn't occurred to him before now that Angie might be the one to call.

"What number are you calling?" came the operator's question through the wire.

"I . . . I want to call . . ." he began, but stopped himself. As quickly as it came to him, the thought as suddenly turned sour. No, it wasn't a very good idea after all. He'd only succeed in alarming Angie. She wasn't particularly tuned in to ESP and events that went beyond explanation in ordinary terms. She loved Percy, true, and would do anything in the world for her that she could, but Angie wasn't the right person to turn to for solutions to things that might involve parapsychology. And certainly, David was a man with no feeling for the occult. He'd accepted a certain amount of belief in other-than-worldly happenings when Angie disappeared, but he was basically a "hard-and-cold-facts" man. This was so unlike the disappearance of Angie, that he'd probably just brush aside Gordon's suspicions as being too absurd to consider. Angie would be sympathetic but baffled by it all and would probably insist on flying back to Charleston just to be near him. That wasn't the kind of companionship he felt he needed at the moment. He needed the clear, reasonable thinking of someone who could accept all his speculation for what it was and help him to sift through until they reached the most sensible conclusion—whatever that was—and then help him decide whether or not there was anything that could be done to aid Percy, other than med-

ically. That person was definitely not Angie . . . and not David either. That person was either Sam or Claire or maybe both if he was lucky.

"Did you wish to place a call?" the operator asked a bit irritably.

"Oh no, operator. No, thank you. I've changed my mind. I'll do it later," he replied.

By dinner time, Percy still showed no sign of regaining consciousness, and Gordon decided to take the nurse's advice to go out for a meal.

"It will do you a great deal of good to get away from the hospital," she told him. "You've been here day and night. You're beginning to look very tired. Why don't you go back to your hotel and get a good night's sleep? If anything happens, I'll be certain to call you, Mr. Brooks."

"I feel like a traitor leaving her here alone," he answered.

"I know. But there's nothing you can do. There's nothing any of us can do but watch her—and wait," the nurse explained.

"But I want to be near in case she wakes up again and says anything more," Gordon replied.

"I'll watch her very closely, Mr. Brooks. I promise. If she says something, I'll make a note of it and leave it at the desk for you to pick up tomorrow."

"But she might not talk to you. She doesn't know you," Gordon reasoned.

"That's true, Mr. Brooks, but I don't think she'd be able to recognize anyone or anything for the next few days. You said you weren't sure she recognized you."

"Do you . . . you suppose she'll come around in a few days?" Gordon asked.

"Well, I don't know," she replied. "It's possible, of course. It's quite possible that she will. In cases of this kind, though, you can't tell what to expect. So I can't make you any promises about that. Not even the doctor will try to predict anything at this point. But there's reason to hope, Mr. Brooks. There really is."

"Thanks." Gordon nodded. Of course, it was ridiculous to ask the nurse to guarantee that Percy would recover.

He didn't know why he asked . . . only because he so longed for reassurance, he guessed.

"You should still get some rest tonight, because you're going to need it in the next few days if she does start to recover. You can't go on forever, you know," she told him.

"Uuuummmmm . . . maybe you're right," Gordon agreed reluctantly.

"Why don't you write your phone number on this pad, and I promise to call you if something happens."

"It doesn't matter what time it is, I would like to be called," he insisted.

"Of course. I understand, and I'll tell the head nurse who comes on the midnight shift, too," the nurse promised.

As he left, Gordon realized that he had only eaten a sandwich at the cafeteria in the hospital and had a quick bite in the morning at the coffee shop in the motel. If he was going to leave the hospital, he might as well leave it completely, and he decided on the motel coffee shop. He was glad he did because the meal was the first complete one he'd had in days. He was also glad he didn't have far to go to his room. The meal in the restaurant, relaxed and leisurely and tasty, had succeeded in unwinding him to a point of lethargy he never thought he would reach again. He was looking forward to a good night's sleep.

As soon as he reached his room, he remembered to make one more effort to reach either Claire or Sam. This time, he was lucky. They were not only home but hoping for a call from him. As briefly and succinctly as he could, he related to Claire the conversation between himself and Percy earlier that day.

"I really wish you'd been with me. I needed someone to talk to about this. I've been trying to figure out if it means anything and if it does—what? I can't decide what to do about it. I don't know if there *is* anything that can be done about it. I really needed to tell someone, though," he explained.

"Did she actually say she was going back to be with Damon?" Claire asked.

"That's exactly what she said," he answered.

"Wait a minute, Gordon. Let me find Sam and put him on the extension. I'd like him to hear this, too." She left the phone for a short time, and when she returned Gordon heard the click of a receiver being picked up.

"Hello, Gordon," came Sam's voice.

"Hi, Sam. Did Claire tell you what happened with Percy today?" Gordon asked.

"I filled him in briefly, Gordon," Claire replied.

"Did Percy say where this island was, Gordon?" Sam inquired.

"No, she just said it was a beautiful island. She said that she was there with Damon, and she couldn't stay here. The pain in her head was too much for her to stand."

"Do you think she knew what she was saying?" Claire wondered.

"How can I tell, Claire? I don't know if she knew she was talking to me. Or even if she realized that she was talking at all."

"Did she recognize you?" Sam asked.

"I can't tell. She seemed very detached . . . remote . . . but I couldn't tell if it was caused by the pain or the medication or if her mind was just wandering. That's why I wanted so much to talk with someone."

"So what it boils down to, then, is do we or don't we believe that she's found Damon Aarons?" Sam said.

"That's exactly it. And if we do believe she has—what do we do about it? If we do anything about it, will it complicate matters? Maybe it would be best just to leave things to Percy and Aarons—will you listen to me? I don't even know that I believe it."

"Do you think it would complicate her recovery if we did try to do something?" Claire wanted to know.

"I don't have the slightest clue," Gordon replied.

"The doctor does think she will recover, doesn't he?" Claire asked.

"They keep telling me not to worry. They won't promise that she's going to recover, but they keep telling me not to worry. It's hard to tell if they're being honest or if they just don't want to concern me . . . and I can't see much improvement. She can talk and she knows she's in

pain, but her mind is behaving strangely. I can't help worrying about her," Gordon told them.

"If Claire and I came down for a few days, would that be all right?" Sam asked.

"I was hoping you could, Sam. I hate to ask you . . . especially both of you, but I'm afraid I'm going back to wondering if there isn't more involved than just the injury. And then I think I'm losing my mind for even thinking of that."

"We'll be there the day after tomorrow . . . both of us," Sam told his friend.

"Gordon, I think I ought to tell you that I saw Elena and told her about Percy. I wanted to find out what she thought about the possibility of Percy's mind making contact with Damon."

"What did she think?" he asked.

"You remember Elena. She thought it was a pretty stupid thing for me to consider. She felt that if she couldn't do it, certainly Percy would never be able to do it."

"Well, maybe she's right, Claire. She ought to know a lot more about this subject than I do," he said.

"I just don't agree with her. Anyway, the reason I mentioned it is that I think I ought to tell her about your conversation with Percy and see what she thinks about that."

"I don't know if you ought to, Claire. She'll probably say the same about that."

"She might. Still, Elena is serious about the world of the occult and parapsychology. She's good at what she does, too. She just doesn't have the special talent for it that Damon does—or the sensitivity that Percy has. I suppose she envies someone who has a genuine gift for extrasensitive perception. But she's not a vindictive person and I'd like to have her on our side. She could be very helpful if she decided to be."

"If you think so, then go ahead and call her. Tell her what Percy said. I suppose the more opinions we get on this the better we'll be able to figure it out."

"I'm anxious to see Percy, Gordon. I'd like to be with her when she's talking about something like she did today. Maybe I could tell whether she's talking about a

dream or if she actually believes it herself," Claire told him.

"You can't see her, Claire. Nobody but the immediate family is admitted into intensive care," Gordon explained.

"Really? I didn't know that," Claire replied.

"Does that make a difference? Do you want to change your mind about coming?" he asked.

"No, of course not, Gordon. We want to come. I just have a feeling that I have to. I don't know what I can do besides keep you company, if we can't see Percy. But I have the feeling that something is happening, and I have to be there," Claire told him.

"I'm afraid I have the same feeling, Gordon," said Sam.

"That's a comfort because so do I . . . only I don't know what it is that's happening," Gordon said.

Claire didn't know what she expected Elena's reaction to be, but she decided it would be best if they could sit down together and discuss it rather than talk over the phone. Elena accepted the invitation to stop over for a drink since it wasn't late. By the time she arrived, Elena had already figured out that the invitation had something to do with Percy. She supposed they were going to try to persuade her to change her mind, but she didn't intend to let them do it. She wondered if something new had developed but decided that Claire would have mentioned it over the phone first. As they sat in the Whites' comfortable brown-and-white living room, Sam opened the conversation with the news that he and Claire were leaving for Charleston day after tomorrow.

"Does that mean she's worse?" Elena asked, nursing her scotch.

"No, it's not that. It's just that something new has come up," Sam told her.

Elena raised her eyebrows and waited. It did seem that everybody enjoyed playing with secrets about Percy.

"She opened her eyes and said a few things this morning . . . while Gordon was with her. He called to tell us about it," Claire explained.

"Good, then she's recovering. I knew she would. Shock can do some frightening things, you know," Elena replied.

"Give her my best when you see her. I'll send her some flowers in a couple of days."

"We won't be allowed to see her. She's still in intensive care. Only the immediate family is allowed to see her. And she's not recovering . . . not yet. We're going to Charleston mainly to be company to Gordon and serve as a sounding board for him. He's the only one around Percy now who knows about last summer in New York and about Damon's disappearance. I think it's getting to be a bit more than he can handle alone," Sam explained to her.

"That seems very generous of you, Sam," Elena said pleasantly.

"What Percy said when she spoke to Gordon is one of the reasons we want to go to Charleston, and one of the reasons why Gordon is anxious to have us there," Claire said.

"And what did she say that's so interesting?"

"She said that she could not stay here, that she had to go back—back to Damon. The pain was too great for her to bear, and Damon was waiting for her back on an island." Claire spoke slowly and clearly so Elena would not miss a single word of what she was saying.

Elena sat straight up in her chair, her body suddenly tense and rigid. "She did not!" she exploded.

"Yes, Elena, that's what she told Gordon," Sam declared.

"I don't believe it. She's obviously out of her head. I just don't believe it. She may have said it, but I don't believe there's a word of truth to it."

"Aren't you even willing to consider the possibility, Elena?" Claire wondered.

"Of course not. I'm no fool. It's absurd. I haven't even been able to raise a response from Damon. Why should I believe that she has just because she says so in a state of delirium? I admit it would be very nice to locate Damon, but I just don't believe she's been able to do what I couldn't do." Elena's eyes flashed as she spoke. It was obvious that Claire had aroused a sense of rivalry without intending to.

"I'm sorry that you can't find any credibility in the

statement, Elena. I hoped that you might make the trip to Charleston with us. You know that Sam and I are only novices in the mysterious supernatural world. Your help would be enormously valuable just in case what Percy was saying is true." Claire tried her best to appeal to Elena through her vanity.

"Claire, I couldn't possibly go to Charleston with you. I have to go to Italy on behalf of the institute. I told you that. I've already postponed the trip for a week. Now, no matter what, I'm leaving the end of next week and there are a million and one things to do before I can go," Elena protested.

"You mentioned Europe, you didn't tell me it was Italy, Elena. Besides it doesn't really matter. We need you, Elena. Please believe that we need you," Claire pleaded.

"Oh, Claire." Elena laughed lightly at the anxious concern on Claire's face. "That's very flattering, my dear, but you're trying too hard, you know. You really are. I can't bring myself to believe there's anything supernatural connected with Percy Brooks's remarks or her state of unconsciousness. I understand that you're concerned for her welfare, but I can't understand why you insist on making more of it than it really is. I know that you're eager for Damon to return, and I share that anxiety for him, believe me I do. But I simply refuse to try to find some thread to connect the two things. One of these days, I'll be able to accomplish Damon's return—with his help, I'm sure—not Percy Brooks's."

"But now we have two bits of information about her. First, that she's Theodosia Burr, and second that she's with Damon on an island. If we can just find out what island, we may be close to figuring out what it all means, and maybe we could bring her out of the coma," Claire reasoned.

"I can't see that there's any connection between those two pieces of information at all, Claire. I think she's dreaming and believes those dreams are real. That's no connection."

"But you were so excited about the 'Bermuda Triangle' thing. I was so hoping you would agree just for that if not for anything else."

"Oh, I still am. But I don't believe it relates to Percy Brooks. Someday I'd like to do an in-depth study of the 'Bermuda Triangle,' many people would, but there's no reason to do it right now," Elena explained.

"Really, Elena, you're damn frustrating," Claire exploded.

"No, not really, Claire. Cautious is the word I'd prefer. The supernatural is my work, not my hobby 'sometimes.' I deal with it all the time, not just when I don't have anything else to do. And when you deal with it seriously you learn to study all the angles. You don't make rash decisions. Just because someone tells you she or he keeps seeing a ghost doesn't mean that you must take their word for it and dash out to get rid of the ghost. There may be a perfectly logical explanation for the specter—a play of ordinary lights and shadows, a low area of land that attracts a patch of fog, any number of things. And it's necessary to check out all the plausible explanations before reaching for a supernatural one," Elena told them. "It's not that I'm unconcerned or callous. It's just that I'm unconvinced."

"You make it sound very sensible, Elena," Sam replied. "Is it possible that if you could be convinced, you'd change your mind?"

"Of course it's possible. I've done that often. But I have to be convinced that the object is a ghost, or in this case, I have to be convinced that Percy has become Theodosia and actually located Damon Aarons. I don't know what I could do, but I certainly would try."

"I suppose that's the most I can hope for. Still, I have a feeling . . . a very definite feeling . . . that something is happening *now* . . . and is about to come to a crucial point. I think waiting may be dangerous. I admit I'm worried about Percy . . . and Damon, too . . . and I don't know what to do about it except to go to Charleston," Claire said.

"If that's what you feel, by all means go, Claire. I think you should and I do wish you luck. I only regret that I don't share that same feeling," Elena stood. They had each made their positions quite clear, and it was obvious that neither was going to sway the other.

"Isn't there any way that I can convince you to visit

Charleston if only to make certain that you're right?" Claire asked.

"I don't have to visit Charleston, and you already said that you won't be allowed to see Percy, so neither would I. The trip would be pointless. Gordon doesn't need all of us to hold his hand and listen to his concerns. You'll do that much better than I. The trip to Italy should be an exciting one, and I want very much to go. There's been a new temple uncovered. They think it might have been associated with some mystical worship of the gods, and the institute has asked me to go and investigate. I'm really looking forward to it," Elena explained.

"How long will you be away?" Sam asked.

"Three weeks to a month, I suspect. It depends on how things go over there," Elena replied.

"You ought to give me the name of someone else at the institute whom I could ask for help while you're gone," Claire suggested.

"Don't be coy, Claire. I know you're not going to consult anybody else," Elena replied in an even tone.

"Oh, but I am, Elena. You're quite wrong about that. If it looks as if Percy is in any danger or if she repeats what she told Gordon, I wouldn't hesitate to go to someone else for help."

"No, I won't give you the name of anybody at the institute," Elena said.

"Then I'll find someone on my own. I came to you first, Elena, because you're Damon's friend and you've been all through the disappearance and the efforts to pull him back. But if you refuse to help, I swear to you that I won't hesitate to go to someone else." Claire was angry but determined.

"I don't believe you, Claire. You were so set against any kind of publicity leaking out that I can't believe you'd bring a stranger into this thing now."

"I wasn't going to allow publicity motivated by greed. But if it's necessary to save Percy's life, I wouldn't hesitate."

"I think you're bluffing, Claire. You said yourself that you'd run the risk of having every psychic nut trying to capitalize on this if the word got out. Would that help

Percy? Besides, if she dies from her injuries, won't you look foolish?" Elena paused. "Good night, you two. I'll be in touch when I get back. In the meantime, if you have any more news about Percy's condition before you leave, I'd like to know about it. As I said, I'm not unconcerned, just unconvinced."

"I doubt if we'll hear anything more before we leave, but we may have some news before *you* leave. In that event, may we call you? Just in case it might make a difference?" Sam asked as he escorted her to the door.

"By all means, I'd like to hear any news," Elena told him.

"Good night, Elena. I'm sorry you can't be convinced," said Claire with a certain amount of hostility.

"And I'm sorry you are," returned Elena, not to be outdone.

Claire slammed the door after her. "Damn her," she said.

"We should have known that Elena wouldn't be so easily convinced, Claire. The evidence does seem pretty flimsy when she repeats it to you."

"Sam, I don't care what she thinks. I don't even care anymore what she does. I feel—and I know there's nothing logical or intellectual about it—I just FEEL that Percy is in more danger than just from the accident, and that if she is reliving the life of Theodosia Burr, that danger could mean she's close to death. I think we need the help of a parapsychologist, and since Elena is not going to help us, tomorrow I'm going to call the institute and find someone who can."

CHAPTER XIV

Time and events began to move swiftly for Aaron Burr. He had actually purchased the rights to four hundred thousand acres of the Bastrop tract on the Washita River for the sum of five thousand dollars. The sum was more than he wished to part with, since he was not able to acquire the total amount he calculated would be needed for the expedition; still he felt it was a valuable expenditure. Now whatever happened in his campaign, he would, if all else failed, be able to establish a settlement there on the Washita.

In Wood County, Virginia, there was developing a considerable amount of speculation and curiosity about the sudden increase in activity on Mr. Blennerhasset's island. It seemed most unusual that in the course of a few short days the island should be overrun with population, principally young men. Along with the large number of young men, there was a vast amount of river traffic which was tied up at the docks of the island. To what cause? To what purpose? It was the endless topic of conversation among the citizens of the neighborhood convenient to the island. To fan the flame of suspicion, an increasing number of editorials throughout the country began to question what could be Colonel Burr's true purpose for the use of Blennerhasset Island. Suspicion and distrust grew and spread like a fungus through the entire United States. Rumors and conjecture mushroomed overnight to cast a shadow of distrust over Burr's every word, every move.

A considerable amount of suspicion was generated by his old friend and compatriot, General Wilkinson, in whom Burr had placed complete trust and in whom he

had confided the full extent of his plans and hopes. Burr was aware that Wilkinson was in the pay of both the United States and of Spain and felt that this would serve as a weapon to use against him in the event it should be needed. Without hesitation, Burr would betray him if the man proved treacherous, and Wilkinson was cognizant of that fact. However, Wilkinson's position was not as weak and subservient as Burr believed it to be. True, Wilkinson was in the pay of two opposing countries, and that position gave him access to both countries. He was a man who believed in serving self first and one of considerably little patience. He rapidly grew weary of waiting for the United States to declare war on Spain so that he and Burr could march into Mexico under the banner of their country. Should that war not be declared, he doubted that Burr would be able to gather the moneys and troops in order to mount an expedition against Mexico. It seemed by far the most satisfactory course for him to abandon Burr and his cause and to prove himself a brave and true patriot to America by sacrificing Burr for his own advantage. He would inform the President of the United States about Colonel Burr's plan. On October 21, he sat down and began a letter to Mr. Thomas Jefferson, President of the United States, which combined fact and fiction to his own best advantage. He wrote:

"The following information appears to rest on such broad and explicit grounds as to exclude all doubts of its authenticity: A numerous and powerful association, extending from New York through the Western States, to the territory bordering on the Mississippi, has been formed, with the design to levy and rendezvous eight or ten thousand men in New Orleans, at a very near period, and from thence, with the cooperation of a naval armament, to carry an expedition against Vera Cruz.

"Agents from Mexico, who were in Philadelphia in the beginning of August, are engaged in this enterprise; these persons have given assurances that the landing of the proposed expedition will be seconded by so general an insurrection as to insure the subversion of the present government, and silence all opposition in three or four weeks. A body of the associates is to descend the Allegheny River,

and the first general rendezvous will be held near the Rapids of the Ohio, on or before the 20th of next month, from whence this corps is to proceed in light boats, with the utmost possible velocity, for the city of New Orleans, under the expectation of being joined in their route by auxiliaries from the State of Tennessee and other quarters.

"It is unknown under what authority this enterprise has been projected, from whence the means of its support are derived, or what may be the intention of its leaders in relation to the territory of Orleans. But it is believed that the maritime cooperation will depend on a British squadron from the West Indies, under ostensible command of American masters. Active influential characters have been engaged in these transactions for six or eight months past; and their preparations are reported to be in such a state of maturity that it is expected the van will reach New Orleans in December, where the necessary organization and equipments are to be completed with promptitude, and it is proposed that the expedition should sail for Vera Cruz about the first of February.

"This information has recently reached the reporter through several channels so direct and confidential, that he cannot doubt the facts set forth; and, therefore, he considers it his duty to make this representation to the executive by a courier extraordinary, to whom he has furnished five hundred dollars; being persuaded, should it prove unfounded, his precaution will be justified, and that otherwise his vigilance will be applauded.

"Whatever may be the general impropriety, I persuaded myself that on a subject irrelative to my official obligations, I shall be excused for addressing you directly and confidentially; but I have another and more cogent reason for deviating, in this instance, from the ordinary course of my correspondence. It is possible the momentous occasion of this letter, and the vital importance attached to it, may have excited solitudes to beguile my understanding and delude my judgement; and in such case I trust the integrity of the intention will secure me to your confidence, and that this letter, with the communication it covers, may find their graves in your breast.

"For although my information appears too direct and circumstantial to be fictitious, yet the magnitude of the enterprise, the desperation of the plan, and the stupendous consequences with which it seems pregnant, stagger my belief, and excite doubts of the reality, against the conviction of my senses; and it is for this reason I shall forbear to commit names, because it is my desire to avoid a great public calamity, and not to mar a salutary design or to injure any one undesignedly.

"I have never in my whole life found myself under such circumstances of perplexity and embarrassment as at present; for I am not only uninformed of the prime mover and ultimate objects of this daring enterprise, but ignorant of the foundation on which it rests, of the means by which it is to be supported, and whether any immediate or collateral protection, internal or external, is expected. Among other allurements proposed to me, I am informed you connive at the combination, and that our country will justify it; but when I examine my orders of the 6th May, I am obliged to discredit it—these imputations.

"But should this association be formed in opposition to the laws, and in defiance of government, then I have no doubt that the revolt of this territory will be made an auxiliary step to the main design of attacking Mexico, to give it a new master in the place of the promised liberty. Should the fact be ascertained by me, I believe I should hazard my discretion, make the best compromise I could with Spain in my power and throw myself with my little band into New Orleans, to be ready to defend that capital against usurpation and violence. It is true the works of the place have mouldered to ruin, yet I think they may, by extraordinary exertions, in a few weeks, be rendered defensible against an undisciplined rabble acting in a bad cause. But, sir, with my instructions before me, and without knowledge of the design, principle or support, of the corps of associates expected from the Ohio, I dare not turn my back on the Spaniards, now in my front, and abandon this scene of disaffection to the certain evils which, without some strong measure of prevention, may possibly accrue in New Orleans . . ."

Wilkinson reread the document and smiled to himself in satisfaction. He had covered every facet he intended to expose and without actually naming Aaron Burr as the traitor, he definitely led suspicion in that direction. He had also prepared the way for his own assignment to take command of New Orleans in order to prevent the capture of that city, for surely President Jefferson could not evade the suggestion implicit in the letter. Once established there, he could take command of the city by order of the President, it would be legal and tidy and quickly accomplished; unlike Burr's plan, it would allow no room for failure. Then he thought himself of one additional suggestion upon which he had not touched. It would cover his flank in the event that war was declared and Burr able to mount his expedition into Mexico:

"Should Spain be disposed to war seriously with us, might not some plan be adopted to correct the delirium of the associates and by a suitable appeal to their patriotism to engage them in the service of their country? I merely offer the suggestion as a possible expedient to prevent the horrors of a civil contest, and I do believe that with competent authority I could accomplish the object."

There; now whichever way the tree fell, he would be able to jump to safety and join with the winning side. The letter was immediately dispatched by personal messenger to Washington City where it was met with unquestioned acceptance by the President. There was no question that the finger of guilt pointed directly to Burr, who had long been a source of distress and distrust for Jefferson. Once and for all he meant to eliminate that obstacle from his future and see that Burr was restrained in prison, at the very least, for the remainder of his life. Without delay, orders were dispatched to apprehend all boats and persons suspected of such an enterprise and put in a course of legal prosecution. And as Wilkinson had hoped, President Jefferson immediately dispatched him to protect New Orleans as soon as possible. All was going well for Wilkinson, at the expense of Burr.

Wilkinson felt obliged, however, to reassure President Jefferson of the high intentions which had prompted him

to write such a letter, and he again prepared a document for the President's personal perusal.

"Pardon the honest pride which impels me to bare my bosom to you," he wrote. "My ultimate views are limited to the acquisition of an honorable fame. I have ever condemned the sordid interests of the world, and estimated property by its immediate utility only—and it is the highest ambition of my soul on a proper occasion, to spend my last breath in the cause of my country." That had the proper ring to it, he decided, and would certainly be supportive of his suggestions and insinuations.

But just to make certain that he was not left a patriot without funds, should he fail to be rewarded by the United States for his efforts, a short time later General Wilkinson sent Walter Burling to Mexico on the public pretext of purchasing mules, with a passport which read: "Whereas, Aaron Burr . . . is preparing to carry on an expedition into the territory of his Catholic Majesty . . . I have thought proper . . . to exonerate my government from a suspicion of participating in this design, to authorize the bearer . . . to pass all guards . . . of the United States and to proceed to the City of Mexico for the purpose of handing to the viceroy a detailed report of said Burr's plans and designs."

Mr. Burling was, indeed, extended every courtesy and allowed to proceed to Mexico City, where he delivered the said report, together with a letter from General Wilkinson stressing the measures which he had taken at the risk of his life, fame, and fortune in order to save the kingdom of Mexico from the attacks of the insurgents and raising the question of payment for those services. He thought it acceptable for Spain to advance him \$85,000 immediately in one sum, to be followed by \$26,000 at a later time. In addition, of course, he would consider it only just and equitable to be reimbursed for those sums he had been obliged to spend in order to sustain the cause of good government, order, and humanity on the part of Mexico. The Spanish viceroy in Mexico thought less highly of Wilkinson's services than did the President of the United States. He returned a curt "thank you" to Wilkinson for his zeal but no money. However, Wilkinson was

not daunted. On the pretext that he had sent Burling to Mexico to secure a report of conditions in that country, he persuaded Mr. Jefferson to pay his expenses, and on November 25 proceeded to New Orleans in an effort to make the city subject to his martial law. In very short order he managed to become virtually a dictator of New Orleans.

On every hand, men who were known to have associated with Burr were being arrested. It did not take a close association to the man to be held in suspicion or to be brought before Wilkinson for questioning. The situation in New Orleans, instead of improving, was far worse for the citizens than it had ever been.

In the meantime, the unsuspecting Burr, the dangerous aggressor, proceeded on his journey down the Ohio River with precisely two boats, a few men, and extremely high hopes for the expedition. Theodosia and Joseph Alston were awaiting his summons to join him, at which time they would leave behind their home at The Oaks to rendezvous with him at a point to be designated.

Unbeknown to Burr, on December 6, the Ohio legislature passed an "Act to Prevent certain Acts hostile to the Peace and Tranquility of the United States." But Blennerhasset knew. And Blennerhasset became very much alarmed when the militia was called out and posted along the river to watch for boats. Word soon reached him that the Wood County militia was planning to invade the island and take into custody each person they apprehended there. Upon learning the intention of the militia, the entire island became a turmoil of confusion and preparation for speedy departure. There was no accounting of the actions of the militia, for while they lined the shores of the river, watching carefully, no move had been made to apprehend any boats which passed down the stream . . . not even those which showed intentions of docking on the island. Therefore, Comfort Tyler and Israel Smith, with four boats and thirty-two colonists, were allowed to travel down the river and tie up at the island docks, where they were greeted by Harman Blennerhasset in a most agitated state.

"I regret, my dear sirs, it is not safe for you and the

colonists to remain on this island. We are in danger of attack at any time from the militia now stationed on the banks. Something has gone awry, and we must leave here immediately . . . tonight, if at all possible," he told them.

"But we thought Mr. Burr would be rendezvousing with us here before our departure," replied Comfort Tyler.

"No, no, our plans have changed, and we will now be forced to rendezvous further down the river. If one of you can manage my wife and children on your boat, I should be most grateful. I will accompany one of the other boats if that seems best to you," he said.

"But we thought to join together with a large number of boats and men. Would it not be best to wait for them before we depart, Mr. Blennerhasset?" asked Israel Smith.

"I fear there is no time for that. The island will surely be invaded by the militia within a few days. There is no longer safety here for any of us," he asserted.

Margaret placed her hand on his arm. "I agree with you, dear. There is no longer a safe haven here on our island, and you must leave immediately. You, of all of them, are in the gravest danger. Though you be innocent of any wrongdoing, you, I believe, are their principal objective. I believe that I, however, am in no genuine danger; and there is no reason for me to flee the island in haste."

Harman could hardly believe his ears. "But, my dear Margaret, I wouldn't consider leaving you and the children here while I deserted you. That would be cowardice of the highest order. We have ever faced adversity together and shall do so now. There is nothing for it but you and the children to accompany me or I shall remain here with you. My word upon it."

Margaret smiled at the fierceness in her husband's voice. It pleased her to find him so protective of her at a time when he was in the greatest personal danger. "I think there's little danger of a fragile woman and her children being arrested, Harman. But if you stay to defend us, you will most certainly be arrested, and if the blood of the soldiers is running high, there is no telling what may befall you. I pray you, for my sake, to depart immediately and with no further delay. All of you must leave," she

said, including Tyler and Israel and their men. "On the morrow, I shall go across the river to Marietta and take possession of the family boat that is being completed. When our things are safely on board, the children and I shall proceed down the river to join you, and there be reunited with Colonel Burr and dear Theo. It will be a joyous reunion for us all."

Comfort Tyler nodded his head in agreement as she spoke. "There is much good sound reasoning in what your wife says, Mr. Blennerhasset. It would be best if you came with us, since you are convinced that the militia will attack if we remain."

Margaret made certain that the men were provided with a hearty meal before they went again down the riverbank to the docks. They thought it best to wait for the cover of darkness so that they might have the opportunity to leave the island undetected. There was no moon; the night was black and cold and the rain made the walking slippery and uncertain. At the bottom of the bank, there was a footway of rails to the boats. Margaret stopped at the footway and took Harman by the arm. "Take care for your own safety, Harman dearest, and be not concerned for our welfare. We shall join you within a few days, never fear. The boys will consider this quite an adventure, I'll wager. I pray it is so for you as well," she told him.

He placed his hands on her still-slender waist and looked at her with a combination of wonder and pride. Her calm strength had always amazed and sustained him, and it did not fail to do so now. Never once in their many years of marriage had he regretted his choice of a wife, although it forced them to flee their home in Ireland and take refuge on an island in the Ohio River. Here they lived with their secret, telling no one that she was his own niece, the daughter of his own sister. Never had they regretted their decision to become man and wife, and they did not regret it now.

"I sorrow that I shall not be allowed to share their adventure with you, my Margaret. I sorrow that so much burden has been placed upon your frail shoulders, but when the purpose of this expedition has been accomplished, your new life will hold so much honor and

comfort and pleasure for you as to make all the hardship seem worth the while. Be supported by that thought, dearest, and by the knowledge that I love you still. We shall meet again in but a few days," he told her. They embraced in farewell. Harman boarded the boat and bade his wife return promptly to the house and not allow herself to be drenched with the rain. Margaret gave a last sweet smile, waved her hand above her head so that he would be certain to see it, and hurried back to the house. On the morning of December 11, when Margaret Blennerhasset woke from her fretful sleep, she immediately rushed to the window, but the boats were no longer moored at the dock. She searched the river, but they were not in sight. She allowed herself only a moment of regret, accompanied by a small sigh, then she hurried about her morning toilet, dressing with care and speed. She had only a small breakfast and gave orders to the servants. Then, she made her way to Marietta to take possession of the family boat in which she intended to follow her husband. But the boats were no longer hers to claim.

"I'm sorry, ma'am, but the boats built for you have all been seized by the government," the shipbuilder told her.

"They could not be, surely. Those were not gunboats. They were merely boats to transport myself and my children down the Ohio River to join my husband. They were boats for our personal use, nothing more."

"It doesn't matter, Mrs. Blennerhasset. They've been taken anyway."

"But we have no intention to engage in hostilities. We plan to peacefully settle the Bastrop lands with other colonists. The government had no cause to take our boats. Now I have no means of leaving the island," Margaret complained.

"There was nothing I could do to prevent it, Mrs. Blennerhasset. They just came in here and said they were seizing all boats we were building. I was afraid they'd likely shoot me—or surely arrest me for conspiracy—if I tried to prevent them," he explained apologetically.

"No, no, of course, the blame is not yours. It's just that I had not anticipated such a happening. I am undecided where to turn."

Filled with dismay, she made her way back to her lodgings, uncertain what the next move should be. Perhaps she would have to stay at the island until she could manage to have a boat constructed for her use. First, she must somehow send word to Harman that she had been unexpectedly delayed so that he would not worry unduly about her. If only she could forestall the militia long enough from the island, all would be well. Perhaps, once the word spread that the militia had departed the island, they would be left again to themselves.

But the scene at Blennerhasset Island was vastly different from the one she left only a few hours before, and the scene to which she would return would be even more disheartening to Margaret.

Soon after her departure for Marietta, Colonel Phelps and his force landed on the island. To their great surprise, with the exception of some servants and the children, the estate seemed to be deserted. Phelps ordered his men to search the woods surrounding the mansion in the event that there were volunteers in hiding there. No one was found. With an ironic twist of fate, at that moment, a boatload of young Bastrop colonists from Pittsburgh, under the leadership of Morgan Neville, appeared cruising down the Ohio River on their way to the island. They were apprehended by the militia near the mouth of the Little Kanawha and taken to the island—fourteen youths in all, frightened and confused. The captives protested against the injustice of their capture. They had done nothing wrong, and they intended doing nothing wrong. They were being held without a fair trial, and they demanded justice.

If justice was what they wanted, so be it, decided the men of the militia. If a trial was what they wanted, so be it. There was no question but that they were guilty. Obviously they were on their way to rendezvous with Colonel Burr, and the President had as much as called him a traitor to his country. If they needed a trial to pronounce them guilty, that would be arranged. Two justices were brought to the island and a trial began. And along with the two justices, more of the Wood County militia arrived at the island, and the once-tranquil retreat became

overrun with boisterous, rowdy, undisciplined soldiers who had never seen the likes of the mansion and its grounds. They soon lost interest in the trial, which made very little sense to them anyway, and they began to roam through the grounds and the beautiful mansion itself. It was not long before they came upon the well-equipped wine cellar in the basement, and in short order began to make a sizable inroad in the supply of wine and stronger spirits stored there. The drunken soldiers commenced the sport of destroying the home of the "Traitor Blennerhasset."

By the time she returned to the island the following day, Margaret stood among the ruins of what was to have been her refuge, the remains of what had once been her elegant and gracious home. She looked about her with a feeling of anger, frustration, disbelief, sorrow, and finally rage. The soldiers had managed to destroy everything they could lay their hands on. Books were scattered and torn, pages strewn about the house and lawn. Curtains, pictures, and mirrors had been pulled down and mutilated, slashed, and stamped on. The magnificent murals on the ceilings had been riddled with bullets. The lavish oriental rugs were covered with filth and slashed deliberately and cruelly. The wine cellar was virtually destroyed. Those bottles which had not been consumed had been smashed against the walls or thrown to the floors. The graceful furniture, imported from Europe, which had once been her pride and joy, had been hacked apart to use for firewood. On the grounds, the shrubberies were destroyed, arbors had been pulled down, and fences and trellises had been torn from the ground to build fires outdoors. What had taken many years of patient effort and a great part of Harman's fortune to build into a magnificent estate, a center of culture for their friends in the valley, was now reduced to rubbish overnight by the pack of rampaging soldiers. The house stood against the gray sky, a ghost of its former self. There was no refuge, no haven here.

Once over the initial shock of the sight, Margaret's mind flew to her children. She called for them outside, but there was no answer. Suddenly, as if in response to her frenzied cries, Colonel Phelps stepped toward her. She

had not been aware of any other human being on the island, so devastated was she by the destruction of her home. As she saw him approaching, she shrank back, but it did not occur to her to run for cover.

"Have no fear, madame," he began in a most apologetic tone. "Your boys are safe. I dispatched them and their 'nanny' to one of the bedrooms upstairs. I gave them orders to lock themselves in and to open to no one but myself. They are safe still and will come out once they know you've returned."

"I suppose I must thank you for that, Colonel, and for so thoughtfully redecorating my home," she said, her voice filled with bitterness.

"I must apologize to you for the waste to your home, ma'am. I was elsewhere on the island engaged in business when some of the men from the militia discovered your husband's wine cellar. I fear they imbibed over much."

"I would dare say they did, Colonel. I should hate to think that such destruction as this was done with deliberate thought and planning. It must give your men a fine sense of pride to know that they so valiantly defended their country from the dreadful danger presented by my children and myself," she retorted.

"I deeply regret that it came to pass under any circumstances, Mrs. Blennerhasset. I must acknowledge that I am to blame for having allowed the militia the free run of the island. However, I did not think that any one of my men would engage in such wanton destruction. If there is anything I can do to be of service to you, Mrs. Blennerhasset, please be assured that I shall endeavor to do what I can," he told her.

"My boats have been confiscated by your government, Colonel Phelps, so I cannot make my proposed journey down the river to meet my husband. Now my home, which I thought would be my refuge, has been willfully destroyed by your men so that I can no longer stay here. I am without a place for myself and my children to stay and I am without transportation with which to depart. What exactly do you suppose you can do for me that you have not already done? Perhaps you might consider lining against the house those of us who remain to serve as tar-

get practice for your men. That seems to be the only despicable deed which you have not committed in the name of patriotism and justice. The murder of a defenseless woman and her helpless children should surely earn for you a promotion. You would be highly commended for having rid your government of a dangerous menace." She spat the words in his face, hoping he would feel the sting of them as much as she felt the loss of her home, her hopes, her dreams. She now feared for Harman's safety, and that, too, added to her despair.

"There is nothing I can say or do which will return to you that which has been lost, Mrs. Blennerhasset, but in all this, I am merely a soldier following his orders. I cannot express to you the regret I feel, the sympathy I extend to you in your present situation, but I can certainly assure you that you are in no danger of harm from either myself or my men. I can arrange for Morgan Neville and his small band of settlers to continue on their journey. I'm certain that they will be able to find room for you and your children on their boat. Obviously, as you say, you can remain on the island no longer, and it would be much safer for you to be with your husband. There is nothing you alone can do here. And though I hesitate to mention such a delicate subject, I regret that I cannot answer for the conduct of each man at all hours of day and night, and to have a woman as attractive as you are, Mrs. Blennerhasset, here on the island alone among the soldiers . . . well, I'm sure you understand . . ."

The fight had gone from Margaret now. The escape that Colonel Phelps offered her with the small band of colonists was all that was left her. There would be no need to fuss about packing proper clothing. There was little remaining; most had been destroyed. Disheartened but resigned, she accepted the opportunity to leave the island in the company of Morgan Neville and his few colonists.

"I shall be ready when the boat is prepared to leave, Colonel Phelps," she told him. Then her thoughts turned to her boys, who must be frightened, and undoubtedly were hungry. "Now I shall go to care for my children," she said simply. She turned on her heels and with dignity

made her way to the house full of fond memories and debris.

In due course, she and her escort came upon her husband at the mouth of the Cumberland River. It was not the joyous reunion they had both hoped it would be, but the past was only the past, they would not mourn for it. Ahead of them was the future, which still held its bright promises of greatness and riches and an exalted position in the new society which they were about to establish.

On December 23, Burr arrived at the rendezvous to be greeted by his aides, Blennerhasset, Tyler, and Floyd. He was introduced to the colonists, some sixty in all, most young, strapping, and adventurous. He insisted on shaking hands and speaking a few personal words to each. There were nine boats among them, comfortable vessels, roofed over and divided into sleeping and living compartments. In the hold of each were stores and implements for the colony. There were the necessary arms and ammunition, enough to protect themselves in the wilderness and to secure game for their sustenance. One of the rafts carried horses. This was the dreaded invasion of which General Wilkinson saw fit to warn President Jefferson to beware, and against which Wilkinson had established himself as a virtual dictator in New Orleans, arresting many good and unsuspecting men.

Leisurely, the little flotilla proceeded down the Mississippi River until it reached Bayou Pierre, about thirty miles above New Orleans. There Burr decided to take a few hours to go ashore and visit with his friend Bruin in the hope that he would be able to learn the latest news. Bruin was surprised to see his friend as well as a trifle uneasy to be in his presence.

After an awkward exchange of pleasantries, Bruin handed his visitor some newspapers from New Orleans, which he had kept. There were two articles of particular interest to Aaron Burr, he thought—two articles which caused Burr to realize at last that he had been betrayed and that probably that betrayal had been committed by his old friend, General Wilkinson. That much was clear, but whether that betrayal was the result of Wilkinson's own capture or his own self-seeking advancement, Burr

could not determine. It made little difference, for the act of betrayal itself was so unexpected, so thoroughly destructive to his entire project, that it shook his composure. He could not possibly be mistaken. Wilkinson was the source of his betrayal, for the first article was the reproduction of a long letter which Burr had written him saying that he had funds and had begun the enterprise. But it was the second article which brought the harsh realization that his dream had vanished, never to be regained. The headline of the article read:

**REWARD — TWO THOUSAND DOLLARS —
REWARD FOR THE CAPTURE AND
ARREST OF COLONEL AARON BURR
FORMER VICE-PRESIDENT OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA**

Burr tried to clear his mind in an effort to think rationally what should be his course now in the face of this accusation. Immediately the thought of escape came to him. It was necessary to escape. There was a wild, desperate look in his eyes, but they were not his eyes at the moment, they were those of Damon Aarons. Somehow he must quickly make his way to Percy in South Carolina, and this time, in spite of all her objections, in spite of her reluctance, he must force her to make the effort to recover her own life in her own time. There could be no more delay. Time was their enemy now. Somewhere in the outer edges of his memory he now recalled that Aaron Burr had been tried as a traitor to his country, but he could not recall the outcome of that trial. It was just possible that Aaron Burr would be shot as an enemy of his country, and then both he and Percy would be lost forever. By herself, Percy would have no hope of returning to the twentieth century, and if Burr died, Damon Aarons would become a disembodied spirit. The game was growing more dangerous and seemed to be moving them into a most unfavorable position.

Only for a second did Colonel Burr's mind falter, then it snapped back under his complete control. He thanked his friend for the information and bade him a brief fare-

well. In the instant that he had allowed his mind to lapse, the thought of escape had come to him, and it had remained there. It did seem like the only sensible choice he could make. He must warn his followers, then he must leave on horseback, in disguise, and make his way to Theodosia in South Carolina, where he would be assured of refuge. The boats and colonists could continue on to the Bastrop lands without him. Surely there could be no reason to stop a group of innocent colonists if they claimed no loyalty or allegiance to Aaron Burr. They would be able to settle the land which was waiting for them, build cabins, and possibly even put in a crop. By that time he would have been able to settle the misunderstanding which had arisen; for whatever else he might be, he did not consider that he was a traitor to his country, and there was no man who lived with the written evidence to prove that he was. After he was successful in erasing this blemish from his name, he would proceed to the Washita River and join his colony there.

But as he approached the river, he realized that, even now, it was too late for escape. Word of his flotilla had obviously preceded him to New Orleans, and a fleet of Louisiana Territory gunboats was moving up the river to capture the pathetic band of volunteers and their leader. Burr stood on a piece of high ground and watched them gliding toward his boats, moored just below him. His vessels would be surrounded by the time he would be able to reach them. For a fleeting second he wondered if he should try to make his way to safety, but he was too much the leader of his men to worry only about himself. He could not bring himself to desert them.

Aaron Burr was promptly taken into custody by United States marshals, assisted by a platoon of soldiers. He offered them no resistance. It would have been folly to do so, one against so many. What an exceptionally efficient business Jefferson has made of this, Burr thought to himself. It is perhaps the best thing he has managed in his entire career. So many men to capture one victim. He has apparently convinced the country that I am the most dangerous of criminals to deserve such an elaborate escort. His dream was ended. There was nothing to do but to re-

lease it and watch it float from him as gracefully as a feather might ascend into the atmosphere unencumbered and free. With a slight shrug of his shoulders he surrendered with his customary good grace and proceeded with little effort to charm the soldiers who were made responsible for his safe arrival. By the time he was tried by a grand jury at Bayou Pierre, serving as his own attorney, Burr had conducted himself in such an exemplary fashion throughout his ordeal that the jury could not help but set him free.

With a courteous smile on his lips and his head held high, a lighthearted Aaron Burr nimbly stepped from the courthouse where the trial had been held and into the sunshine only to be arrested anew before he reached the street. This time, he was informed, he would be tried before a court-martial board. Immediately, Burr spied Wilkinson's fine hand in this doing. During the trial he had become aware of Wilkinson's position in New Orleans, which meant that Wilkinson's betrayal of him had been deliberate. Having turned against him and having set the trap to catch him, Wilkinson would never allow him to escape in order to reveal to the world that Wilkinson himself had been involved in whatever plot there may have been—and far worse. If I stay here, there is a serious danger that he would find the means to have me shot before I could reveal anything against him, and the court-martial trial is, of course, a mockery, he reasoned. A court-martial board would necessarily be made up of officers directly under Wilkinson who would do his bidding, when, in fact, I should not be subject to a court-martial by any stretching of his imagination. I am a civilian, not subject to military rule, and should be tried in a civilian court if at all.

It was not a difficult task for Burr to persuade the authorities that he needed to be allowed time to prepare his defense. In the time they granted him, he somehow managed to procure for himself a horse as well as the clothes fit for a frontiersman and a floppy white hat—a perfect disguise for the ordinarily dapper Colonel Burr. Carrying with him provisions and cooking equipment, Burr managed to disappear into the wilderness in order to escape

his pursuers. To remain in hiding for a time was all very well, but he could not manage it forever. His design was to seek safety with Theodosia, who, surely, would offer him shelter. Something in his mind kept driving him back to her more and more urgently. At length, he could struggle with this pleading insistence in his mind no longer, and he altered his course toward South Carolina. He hoped his old and dirty clothes and his several weeks' growth of beard would serve to protect him from discovery on his journey. But it was his eyes—those remarkable, brilliant, deep, penetrating eyes, which had ever been his distinguishing mark and had proved to be so irresistible to the ladies in other times—that proved to be his downfall. The circular which had been widely distributed, which offered a reward for his apprehension, had been read by nearly every person in the country. It described his appearance and stressed the quality of those eyes.

Aaron Burr, at last, ventured from the wilderness and into the Louisiana Territory on his way to South Carolina. But he was uncertain of the roads in this area, and he wished to waste no time in being lost. In the little town of Wakefield in the Louisiana Territory, he paused and hesitated, and then determined that it would be best to ask for directions from some of the local inhabitants. As soon as he found a tavern, he stopped to ask directions of two men who were seated at a table. They were chatting and drinking ale and appeared to be familiar with the tavern-keeper. They would certainly be able to tell him which direction he must take.

The man who politely answered his questions was named Nicholas Perkins, a lawyer, who was intrigued by the description of the man listed on the circular—so intrigued that he had memorized the description. Now as he gave directions to the traveler, he noted the unusual, magnetic quality of the man's eyes. As quickly as he could, Perkins rode to nearby Fort Stoddart and reported to the commandant, Lieutenant Gaines. With a detachment of calvary, they immediately set out to apprehend the fugitive, following along the road Perkins had instructed him to take.

"You remember, Lieutenant, I'm the one who claims

the two thousand dollars' reward money. You see that I get it," Perkins reminded him.

Gaines nodded in response.

Burr was traveling at a leisurely pace and not far along the road ahead of them. It wasn't long before they overtook him, and again Aaron Burr was arrested. This time he would be tried by the chief jurist of the land, Chief Justice John Marshall. President Jefferson himself brought the charges of treason against the United States of America against his former Vice-President, Aaron Burr. The trial was set for the House of Burgesses in Richmond, Virginia, since there were no suitable facilities for it in Washington, D.C.

Although it was merely a trial before a grand jury, by mid-May, crowds had begun to gather in Richmond. There was a feeling of festive excitement in the air. Hundreds of people, including the United States senators and representatives, foreign diplomats, and high-ranking army officers vied with ordinary citizens for seats at the proceedings.

The chief prosecutor for the case was United States District Attorney George Ray, acting on personal orders from the President. He was thought by many to be the most brilliant trial lawyer in the country, and Jefferson was firmly resolved that there must be no opportunity for the traitor to escape his just punishment. Already Burr's two chief messengers in his enterprise, his friend Samuel Swartout and Erich Bollman, had been tried by Chief Justice Marshall on charges of treason and both men had been found innocent. The verdict left Jefferson enraged, and he did not intend to allow the verdict to be repeated in the case of Aaron Burr.

Burr chose as his attorney, an old reprobate, Luther Martin of Maryland, a veritable genius of law—an eccentric addicted to drink, it was true, but a genius nonetheless—and a man whose courtroom oratory could be matched by no other man in the country save Burr himself. Each of the lawyers had several associates or assistants about him, and the lines of battle were quickly drawn.

Through the trial, Burr was actively engaged with his

lawyers in determining the direction of his defense. Again he was the very essence of a serene, debonair gentleman, and his conduct in the room was impeccable. His clothes he chose with elegant taste, and saw to it that they were superbly cut. His company was sought by everyone when he appeared at a tavern in the afternoon to sip a glass of sack or Madeira. To all, he was courteous and cordial, and as ever, he succeeded in charming all those about him. Throughout the trial he remained optimistic, and at times even a bit cocky, as he did one morning when he stood and requested that the court issue a subpoena to the President of the United States to appear as a witness, since it appeared he was being tried, not for alleged treason as he had been accused, but rather because he was the political opponent of the President.

The courtroom became a madhouse as together the prosecution attorneys jumped to their feet to protest the request as being ridiculous, as making light of the judicial system, as turning the trial into a circus, as desperately attempting to throw the focus of the trial from its true purpose—the trial of Colonel Burr for treason. At length, Luther Martin rose from his seat and lifted his arms to indicate that the opposing attorneys should calm themselves. The justice pounded for order with his gavel, and after considerable grumbling, the prosecution attorneys resumed their seats to listen to what they hoped would be a reasonable statement from Attorney Martin. He took a minute to gaze at each man personally before he began.

"This is a peculiar case, Mr. Justice," he commenced.

"The President has undertaken to prejudice my client by declaring that 'Of his guilt there can be no doubt.' He has assumed to himself the knowledge of the Supreme Being Himself, and has pretended to search the heart of my highly respected friend. He has proclaimed him a traitor in the face of that country which has rewarded him. He has let slip the dogs of war, the hell hounds of persecution to hunt down my noble, innocent friend.

"And would this President of the United States, who has raised all this absurd clamor, pretend to keep the papers which are wanted for this trial where life itself is at stake? It is a sacred principle that in all such cases the ac-

cused has a right to all the evidence which is necessary for his defense. And whoever withholds, willfully, information that would save the life of a person charged with a capital offence is substantially a murderer, and so recorded in the register of heaven.

"What, sir, shall the Cabinet of the United States be converted into a lion's mouth of Venice or a repertorium of the bloody Inquisition? Shall envy, hatred, and all the malignant passions pour their poison into that Cabinet against the character and life of a fellow citizen?

"We are told that we ought to respect the President. Will the President think himself insulted by the demand of a mere document?

"Mr. Justice, we appeal to the Supreme Maker that we only wish justice and fear only perjury. We approach with uplifted hands the sacred altar of justice as a sanctuary to screen us, not from just punishment, but from unjust rancorous persecution." His voice lifted to a fever pitch as he pleaded, "From this sanctuary we confidently expect protection!"

For a minute, he remained standing, his hands uplifted. Then, as he resumed his seat, the courtroom fell into such an uproar that the Chief Justice was forced to adjourn for the remainder of the day.

In spite of the lively protest of the prosecution, a subpoena was sent to the President, who merely chose to ignore it, and the court, of course, was powerless to force him to appear.

General Wilkinson arrived about a month after the trial began, just as the attorneys for the prosecution began to think there was little hope for conviction. He appeared in his full-dress uniform to testify, his manner cocky and strutting. He was on the stand for the next four days, delivering a mighty mass of words which charged Aaron Burr with guilt and dishonor. But his composure began to show signs of crumbling as he was forced to admit that he had altered certain parts of the letter from Burr which he forwarded to the President, and he even omitted certain sentences tending to incriminate himself. In truth, Wilkinson did himself no good by his testimony and might have inadvertently aided the cause of Burr. He soon found that

he had become the villain of the piece as far as the citizens of Richmond were concerned, while affording Mr. Burr further opportunity to demonstrate his graciousness. Following Wilkinson's testimony, Colonel Burr rose immediately and declared that no consideration, no calamity, no desperation should induce him to betray a letter confidentially written. The statement bought an appreciative round of applause from the spectators, and he smiled magnanimously, with a slight bow to all the spectators.

The good people of Richmond had taken Colonel Burr so to their hearts that it was with dismay that they learned the verdict of the grand jury. He was found guilty and it was recommended that he be indicted for treason and misdemeanor.

Attorney Hay immediately jumped to his feet and moved for the commitment of Aaron Burr to the jail for safekeeping. Colonel Burr immediately asked for his release on bail. But Burr, nonetheless, was finally removed to the state penitentiary, a mile or so out of town, where he was assigned three good-size rooms on the third floor.

As always, Aaron Burr obtained for himself as much comfort as he possibly could, which was considerable. He soon learned that in elegant circles in Richmond, public opinion was strongly in his favor, and his rooms were daily thronged with visitors. People swamped him with messages and notes and inquiries; they brought oranges, lemons, pineapples, raspberries, apricots, cream, butter, ice, and other gifts in endless variety. He constantly received cakes and confectioneries and flowers of all descriptions. In truth, he could hardly remember how long it had been since he had received more favorable treatment. But he longed for the company of Theodosia still. He wrote, at length, requesting that she come to be with him. Promptly she arrived with Joseph and their son. During the month of July, with the temperature at ninety-eight or above, she went everywhere in Richmond, earning many friends for herself and her father and exhibiting an inexhaustible charm to all she met.

On August 3, 1807, in the principal chamber of the Virginia House of Burgesses in Richmond, Virginia, during the warmest summer Virginia had suffered in years,

the actual trial of Aaron Burr began. The courtroom was stifling with the summer heat and the heat generated by the bodies of interested or merely curious observers. Theodosia was not well and found that the stifling temperature made her extremely uncomfortable, but she gathered together all her stoic willpower and forced her frail body to remain erect throughout each day. She smiled encouragement to her father constantly and was his most staunch supporter in this adversity as she had ever been in all others.

Whenever the opportunity arose, and it frequently did, Colonel Burr took part in the questioning of the witnesses on the stand. He did so with great facility. Under his cross-examining, General Eaton was forced to admit that he had made an "under-the-table" arrangement with the government whereby they would pay him the sum of ten thousand dollars, which he claimed was owed him from previous services, before he would agree to serve as a witness for the prosecution. Under Burr's careful and patient cross-examination, his friend Commodore Thomas Truxton was forced to admit that Burr had never actually said anything which would indicate that he planned treason.

"Did you ever hear me express any intention or sentiment respecting a division of the union?" Burr asked.

"No, sir. I never heard you express such intentions or sentiments," Truxton replied.

"Did I not state to you that the Mexican expedition would be very beneficial to the United States?"

"You did," Truxton responded honestly.

"Had you any serious doubt as to my intention to settle those lands—the proposed colony in the Louisiana Territory?" Burr inquired, thinking to himself how fortunate it was that he had spoken to Thomas in glowing terms of the colony he hoped to found on the Washita.

"Far from that," Truxton replied, as Burr knew he would.

"Was the expedition against Mexico to take place only in the event of a war between the United States and Spain?"

"Yes, sir."

Burr turned to face the witness squarely. "In other words, Commodore," he said, "my expedition would not have initiated such a war, but would have invaded Mexico only in the event that a state of war with Spain already existed; that is to say, in the event that General Wilkinson's army and the armies of Spain engaged in conflict, only then would I have led my expedition into Mexico."

"That was my clear understanding of your intentions, Colonel Burr," Truxton replied, nodding his head.

"Did I indicate to you that it was my intention to keep any portion of Mexican territory for myself?" Burr was again pacing up and down in front of the witness.

"No."

"It was my intention, then, as expressed to you, to plant the flag of the United States in these lands?"

"That was my clear understanding," Truxton did his best to keep his eyes level and avoid staring at the floor.

Burr smiled at Truxton in satisfaction. "I thank you for your testimony, sir. If it please the court, I have no wish to question the commodore further."

Commodore smiled tentatively at his friend and was happy the questioning by Burr was finished.

At length, it became clear, after a long parade of witnesses for the prosecution, that they could not produce the necessary two witnesses to prove that Burr had actually committed an overt act of treason.

On December 1, the case went to the jury, who deliberated only a few hours before returning with the verdict.

The foreman read their findings.

"We the jury say that Aaron Burr is not proved to be guilty under this indictment by any evidence submitted to us. We therefore find him not guilty."

The trial was over. At last Aaron Burr could begin to think of other things, could again pick up the threads with which he meant to weave the cloth of his future.

Theodosia was relieved to the point of being nearly brought to tears. She let forth a little cry of joy and leaned forward to embrace her father, an embrace which he returned with considerable warmth and affection mingled with pleasure at hearing the verdict which had just been delivered. Now, surely, she thought there would

be only good sunny days before them, to be filled with happiness and accomplishment. Joseph stretched out his hand to his father-in-law. Like the others, he received the verdict with considerable satisfaction. Seeing this sign of friendship, Theodosia forgot that they were surrounded by strangers and threw her arms around her husband with gratitude. She had never really faced the prospect of what she might do had the jury pronounced her father guilty and sentenced him to death. Now she would never have to.

Putting her arm through that of her father and linking the other through that of her husband, they walked out the courtroom into the bright sunlight to breathe the fresh air, which, in spite of the still oppressive heat of early September, to Theodosia and her father seemed as sweet as any day in April.

In the evening, after Gampy had been put to bed, and Joseph had received a group of Richmond businessmen, Theodosia and Aaron were able to spend their first few precious minutes alone together.

"Are you strong enough to walk a bit, my Theo?" he asked.

Her happy laughter sounded like a small, tinkling bell on the night air. There was a new spirit of gaiety about her. "Father, I think I could walk forever, I am that light of heart this evening. And how certain I am that I would enjoy it ever so much more than sitting here." She indicated the chair upon which she was seated. "I do believe that I have spent enough hours in a seated position to sustain me through the rest of my life," she said as she stood beside him. As they began to stroll aimlessly along, she held his arm, and thought how very good it was to have him free once more.

"And what will you do now, father?" She inquired. "Does establishing a law practice in Charleston suit you any better now?"

"I will have to remain here for a short time longer. There's another indictment for which I am to be tried, but it is merely legal folderol. You needn't concern yourself with that. Then, perhaps, I shall revive my plans to colonize the Bastrop land. We can still establish our society there. I shall have to consider the prospect of that at

some length. But perhaps I should not tie myself down to such a provincial enterprise. The whole world is open to me now. I shall see . . . I shall see . . ." he explained.

She listened but made no reply. They walked on in silence for awhile.

"I'm afraid I shall not be able to stay beside you this time. Joseph feels that we have been gone as long as we possibly dare from The Oaks. He is particularly anxious to return home. And I must admit that my own lack of energy causes me to long to return. I would that I could remain with you to the very end of your troubles, but this accursed body to which I so desperately cling is, I fear, in much need of rest. Oh, how I long for the days at Richmond Hill when I was young and vigorous. Nothing could make me rest then. Do you remember, papa, what an active, gay thing I was?" she asked.

"Those were merry times, my Theo. But there will be others even more gay. We have a splendid future before us still, you and Gampy and Joseph and I."

"Not unless you learn how to avoid calamities in your life, papa," she chided.

"There is a spa in Virginia where I wish for Joseph to take you. You might benefit much from the cure," he told her.

"No, no, father, I couldn't. It would remind me too much of what we had planned and of what we have been through here. I do hate that area of Virginia now. It has caused you such grief. There is a spa at Ballston that I think I may visit if my health does not soon improve. Joseph has given me leave to journey there when I feel that I must. I do hate to be an invalid for Joseph so constantly. It can give him naught but pain and sorrow to see me so."

Again they walked in silence, then in unison turned and began to retrace their steps. Aaron stopped and took her by the hand. He looked into her eyes. There was a serious expression on his face; no longer did it reflect the jubilation of his release.

"Percy," he said, waiting until he felt she had time to respond before continuing.

Theodosia stared at him, unable to speak. She knew not how to answer her father.

"Percy," he repeated and waited for her to answer. Still she did not.

She stared at him perplexed. For a long moment there was a chill silence in the air.

"Father, are you ill?" Theodosia at length inquired, placing the back of her graceful white hand against his cheek.

"This is no time to play tricks with me. It may be the last opportunity we will have to be together, Percy. I insist . . . I demand that you speak to me," Damon Aarons persisted.

"Why, papa dearest, of course, I will speak to you, but I cannot decipher what is your meaning. It is you who are playing tricks with me," Theodosia protested. She withdrew her hand. There was no sign of fever on his brow, but her father was talking wildly, in a manner strange to her. But she had never heard him speak so. Even his voice was different, the inflection, the timbre, the accent—the difference was slight but discernible. She pulled away from him. This slight difference made him almost a stranger to her. It frightened her.

"Percy! Percy! Don't you understand what I'm telling you? You can't simply hide in another person. You must speak to me. It's important, desperately important." He placed both his hands on Theodosia's shoulders and looked her determinedly in the eyes. She twisted her head from side to side, but he would not let her go. His gaze was penetrating, commanding. Percy felt compelled to respond, but the memory of the hideous pain forced her to take refuge deeper in the safety of the dark corners of Theodosia's mind.

"Papa. Papa, don't. Don't, you frighten me. I fear you've taken leave of your senses." Theodosia's voice was reduced to a whisper. His cold fury she had encountered before this time and found awesome, but never had it been directed at her before. Nor had she ever seen him in as frenzied a rage as he now appeared to be. He was the dearest of men to her, but she had no idea how to receive

his wild rantings, how to turn his mind back toward the sanity of their relationship as father and devoted daughter. For a moment only, she contemplated the possibility of running to the safe refuge of Joseph's arms. But it was only a moment, as she remembered that he was engaged in the discussion of something to do with business, and he would not be pleased to welcome a hysterical wife seeking comfort from a father who had apparently taken leave of his senses. She knew not what to do or where to turn. Before she could move in any direction or even decide how to meet this latest adversity, Damon grasped her roughly by the arms and began to shake her.

The act of violence so startled and terrified poor Theodosia, who had been such a stalwart support of her father all through the trial, that she began to weep. She could bear no more distress—no more. Her reserve of patience and strength had been lavishly expended on her efforts to be cheerful and optimistic in the courtroom for the sake of her father and to charm the good people of Richmond with her unflinching bright humor and graciousness. She had withheld none of her energies to carry her over any future woe, believing with all her being that when her father should be acquitted, their fortunes would revolve full circle and all would be favorable for them. She was now without support, without resources to fight against what she believed was the madness into which her father had fallen. She knew not whether he would become violent and beat her until she expired or mercifully joined him in his madness. But whatever came, she would share with him this misfortune as she had shared with him so many others. She could do naught but weep, and she did so, not hysterically but pathetically. It was a mourning for all the precious things they had been denied by a hostile world and a capricious fate—her health, the respect her father had once commanded, and the sacrifice of their dreams, his lost political career, and the hopelessness of their future as she could see it.

Damon suddenly realized how tragically and deeply this vulnerable young woman had been wounded, what an immeasurable agony of spirit she had suffered on behalf of a

father whom she worshiped, and ever would. Was ever a man so blessed with a daughter as was Aaron Burr? The need to comfort her engulfed him. He enclosed her tenderly in his arms and held her close while she wept as pitifully as a child until at last her grief and despair were washed away in the flood of tears. As her sobs began to subside, he held her a little from him and placed a gentle hand caressingly under her chin. He tilted her tear-stained face toward his own.

"I understand what you are suffering, my dear. I understand. Although I may not comprehend the extent of your sorrow, I do sympathize with it. I would it were in my power to change your place in history or to alter what I fear is ahead of you. But that cannot be. History is history, and what has been will be again as it is relived. If there is solace for you knowing that I feel you are, without question, one of the most valiant, most truly superior and admirable women the world will ever know, then be comforted by that most sincere thought."

He spoke softly and haltingly. He, too, had fallen under the spell of this woman who was so charming in her openness, her honesty, her matchless courage, and her unshakable devotion to her father.

"Oh, father, I shall always treasure what you have now spoken to me," she replied simply.

"I regret more than I can tell you that you have been required to suffer so greatly on behalf of Aaron Burr," Damon told her.

"I regret nothing, father," she replied. "I had rather not lived than not to be the daughter of such a man."

They stood together in silence for a time, each studying the face of the other. There were no more words necessary on the part of Theodosia. If she had been a religious woman, she would have offered a prayer of thanks that her father had been delivered from the brink of madness, but she was not. Her father had recommended no religious training for her among her rigid course of studies. He believed in none, and as in all other things, she adopted the thinking of her father.

Damon Aarons wondered what response he might evoke were he to attempt to arouse Percy once more. He

had no desire to cause unnecessary alarm to Theodosia again; quite the contrary, he found that what he did feel was a strong desire to protect her from whatever further damage her father's overpowering ambition might do to her gentle spirit. This new emotion troubled him. Was he, like the aging, hard-drinking lawyer Luther Martin, succumbing to her spell? Was it possible that he had become infatuated with this woman? Or had he been infatuated with Percy all along and found the coupling of her spirit with that of the irresistible Theodosia Burr more tempting than he could withstand? Was he being lulled into a false, numbing euphoria from which he would not wish to escape? Considering the possibility, it held no alarm for him as he gazed at the lovely face of Theodosia. But would the forces of the life which controlled the events of history allow him, an entity from another century, to intrude, to alter in any slight way, the affairs of the past? They had shown no sign of allowing the smallest deviation thus far in spite of the best efforts of Aaron Burr. And he had been concerned only with returning Angie to her own time, and then himself, and finally Percy. None of that involved altering the events of the past in any substantial form. He had failed to complete the transfer of himself and Percy thus far. Was it possible that the fates intended for him to remain with her and Theodosia in this time? Was that to be his ultimate happiness? As he gazed at her, he had little doubt of it. And to possess her, he would willingly make the sacrifice.

Theodosia smiled a most engaging smile for the man she supposed to be her father. "I am much gratified to know that you are not truly in danger of losing your wits, father. I believe I could endure any suffering pressed upon me save that."

What a fool am I, thought Damon Aarons. What a great fool, and what a ghastly trick of fate. There is no hope for me with Theo if I remain, nor with Percy either. She would never be drawn into an incestuous relationship, and it could be nothing else for her. To her I am her father, and I can be nothing else, hope for nothing else. To the world I must remain her father, only that. It is essential that I put all thoughts of her from my mind, all

unnatural emotions from my thoughts, and all longings for her from my emotions. I dare not allow my desires to wander again and muddy up my clear and firm resolve. My one purpose must be to save Percy and myself before the next disaster befalls Aaron Burr and his exceptional daughter—as it surely must. He is too obviously a man who courts misfortune, who creates his own disasters. Like all great men of literature or history who live their lives in tragedy, he has one great flaw—that relentless, overriding ambition of his. I must part from him immediately, and in spite of her reluctance, I must drag Percy from her safe hiding place and prevent her total emergence into Theodosia. I must force her to return to her own life and face whatever suffering awaits her there. Can it be worse than the suffering of Theodosia? Percy must not be allowed to fade from existence when the life of Theodosia ends.

Damon Aarons strained himself to resist the innocent, appealing beauty of Theodosia Alston, and taking her face between his two hands, looked deep into her wide, bewildered eyes. She offered no resistance. There was nothing in his manner to alarm her. His own magnetic, piercing eyes searched hers in an effort to plumb her very soul. Wherever Percy was, she must be made to respond. She must be made to acknowledge, to answer him. Her character must be made to surface so that he could communicate with her. She must be made to realize the serious consequences facing her if she failed to return to her own time. But she had succeeded in submerging herself into the inner depths of Theodosia and he was unable to seek her out.

"Percy, you must struggle. You must come to me. I command you." His voice was no longer soothing and filled with tenderness. It was harsh and strong and relentless.

A veil passed over Theodosia's large, clear eyes, a curtain behind which not only Percy could hide, but behind which Theodosia could also seek refuge from further torment. Damon Aarons was faced with the stubborn resistance of Percy to hide from her own pain, as well as Theodosia from her despair.

"Father, do you not treat me so. I could endure any

privation but the loss of your sanity. For if you lose your will, your mind, your purpose, where shall I find the strength to help me endure what I must then bear? I beg you, do not yield up the precious possession of your reason without a struggle—for my sake, father, for my sake," she pleaded with him.

Damon Aarons looked at her serious face with a feeling of helplessness. He must persist until he pried Percy loose from her hiding place, and yet he could not bring himself to further inflict pain upon the mind of Theodosia. It was an insoluble riddle. He must find a way to approach Percy without feeling the presence of Theodosia. He did not know what the future would hold for either of them, but he must make the opportunity, and next time he must not fail. He dare not fail. His extrasensory awareness, which he had allowed to remain dormant through his entire association with Aaron Burr, indicated strongly that he might have no other opportunity. More and more he felt a sense of urgency about the return. But that would have to come at some future time. He, just this once, could no longer resist the impulse to take Theodosia in his arms, draw her close to him, feel her supple young body pressed against his own, as his mouth sought hers in a warm and longing union. Theodosia responded to her father's embrace, needing to assure him of her devotion, needing to assure him of her need for him, needing to draw some of his strength to her. And Percy Brooks comingled her strong embrace with that of Theo. She needed to draw strength from this man to face the decision that she alone must make, and she knew that he would soon force her to make. She had grown to love and trust him. She did not wish to fail him or her family in the life that was her own, but she could not bear the thought of returning deliberately to the scorching pain which had attacked her as they attempted their escape before. And yet she was not quite willing to release him to go back to his life and leave her entirely stranded here. Desperately she clung to him, and would have spoken to him as Percy, but she could not bring herself to that point. Together they stood, locked in an urgent embrace as the cicadas played their summer

tune, to which they were oblivious. Damon Aarons, lost in his desire for this young woman, cared not for time, nor space, nor identity—only for the wonder of his enchantment.

CHAPTER XV

At last the lengthy, drawn-out legal processes ground to a halt. The government, having tried every resource to convict Aaron Burr, could do no more. It became evident, even to Jefferson, that Burr could not be pronounced "guilty" without the tangible proof to prove him so. That proof they did not have. And so Aaron Burr was free once more, not because he was free of guilt, but because his accusers lacked the evidence to prove that guilt.

Richmond was not at liberty to resume its provincial way of life. The carnival atmosphere vanished, and the House of Burgesses again was free to take up such duties as were required to govern the state of Virginia.

Aaron Burr was once more a private citizen like the other citizens of the country. He was no more the "cause célèbre," and the good people of Richmond, who had so thronged him in the last few months, now found that their time was otherwise occupied. It seemed to Burr the proper time to depart from Richmond.

Following the ordeal, Burr thought it best to return to Baltimore, where he accepted the hospitality of his lawyer and friend, Luther Martin. He and his friend Samuel Swartout planned an indefinite stay as the guests of Mr. Martin, and were greatly dismayed to discover this was not to be.

In all, he had suffered through trials by five juries in Kentucky, Mississippi, and Virginia, each ending in the verdict of "not guilty." Burr considered that he had earned a much-needed respite, and he was thoroughly unprepared for the public condemnation which he received when he and Swartout arrived in Baltimore.

Crowds appeared in the streets, marching by Mr. Martin's house. The enraged populace staged a spectacle at which they hanged him in effigy. Whatever public acceptance Colonel Burr had expected to receive was not to be found in Baltimore. A troop of cavalry was called out to prevent the outbreak of violence, but they merely stood on the edge of the crowds and watched the proceedings in amusement. There was mischief and malice everywhere, and those few friends who remained true to Burr feared for their own lives as well as his.

Aaron Burr was a man to survive, and he refused to be intimidated by a group of rabble. He insisted upon walking the city streets. As the crowds grew more daring, the apprehension of his friends increased, and he was finally persuaded to allow them to spirit him out of Baltimore and to seek refuge in Philadelphia. Once there, he secured a room where he could hide away. It was in a French boardinghouse and barely adequate for his needs. He had little money left, only what he could borrow from his few remaining friends. In the evenings, the room was too ill lit for him to read what few books he was able to secure, and unable to indulge in this best-loved pastime, the days and nights dragged on. The unhappy Burr grew pale and dejected. He suffered greatly from his current status. There seemed to be no hope, no future for him for the first time in his eventful life.

Damon Aarons found the life disagreeable also, but he was able to spend more time now in control of the body they shared. The time seemed most appropriate for him to return to his own century, but he could not bring himself to do so. If only Percy were with him, he thought. Never had he felt Burr so discouraged, so incapable of resisting his departure. Why should any man desire to continue to live as Burr now was forced to do? But he could not leave without Percy. It was his hope that as each day passed, her body would be healing to the point where Percy would be able to return without pain. This, he decided, must be his appeal to her. But how to arrange to be with her, he could not devise. Burr was constantly in danger when he appeared publicly; his only hope of surviving was to remain hidden, and he could never bring

himself to place her in a like danger by requesting that she join him. He refused to allow himself to think on Theodosia, for in the stolen moments when he did so, his desire, his resolve to leave deserted him. For Percy's sake, he must resist that temptation. There was nothing for it but to wait and see what opportunity might arise.

Aaron Burr had acquired staggering debts for a man with no means of support. He had no occupation other than the law, and the practice of that was now denied him. He could hope for no appointment, because somehow, in spite of his acquittal, the public opinion had branded him a traitor. Jefferson had won at least a part of the struggle between them. Now Burr was not only in physical danger, but also in danger of being thrown into debtor's prison for failure to pay his numerous creditors. There was no security for him in the United States, and there was no hope for any in the foreseeable future. Aaron Burr began to think that his salvation might be somewhere abroad—England, perhaps. He might be able to reawaken an interest in his Mexican project if he were only able to plead his cause personally. And if England refused him, why he would appeal to Napoleon. That dynamic leader of France would surely recognize a kindred soul in Burr and provide him the assistance to establish a kingdom in Mexico. As the prospect took shape in his mind, his spirits revived.

He scraped together what moneys he could from dear friends and wrote a letter to Theodosia to hurry to New York, where he would divulge his plans to her and where she might bid him farewell.

Joseph did not wish her to undertake the journey to New York. It was such an arduous trip by coach, but he could not deny her the privilege of saying a fond farewell to her father. She had worried so for his well-being and grieved so for his failing fortune that her own health had taken a turn for the worse. Perhaps the trip might prove beneficial after all. Although Joseph was unable to accompany her in the spring of 1808, Theodosia would not be detained. She pleaded, she begged, she cried, and at length she promised to proceed to Ballston Spa in Saratoga. She would remain there and partake of the waters

until Joseph was able to join her or until he sent for her to return again.

Aaron took rooms for himself and Theodosia under the names of Mr. H. E. Edwards and his sister, Mary Anne Edwards, who would be accompanied by her seven-year-old son. The disguise suited Burr's sense of intrigue, and it was necessary, since he was still under indictment in New York and New Jersey. But the landlady soon grew suspicious of the relationship and they were forced to vacate the rooms. They moved from the home of one friend to the home of another in an attempt to avoid being apprehended. Theodosia gave her father all her support, all her time, all her energy, all her attention, and all her affection. She was available when he needed her and made it a particular habit to keep her demeanor cheerful and optimistic. Only once did she depart from this behavior.

They were together in his room when Damon Arons spoke to Percy. Caught unaware, Percy automatically responded. She had not meant to do so. She had intended to stay in the safe refuge of Theodosia, but Theodosia was giving all her strength to sustain her father, retaining none for herself. All too easily and quickly Percy slipped to the fore when she was summoned by Damon.

"Percy, Aaron Burr means to sail on the ship *Clarissa Ann* as soon as it is able to leave the harbor. How long he will be gone, I cannot tell. What will occur while he is abroad, I don't know. The time has come for us to make a final effort to return to our own time. I know what is troubling you about the return, and you must face that pain, Percy. You can't continue to avoid it. Surely you can tell that Theodosia is in failing health. She does not improve."

"Yes, I know she is," Percy agreed.

"Then you must realize the urgency of our return. It has to be now," he told her.

"Yes, I know that there's a risk in staying here," she agreed.

"You can't be content as you are. The poor young woman is also in pain. You must be suffering with her. Wouldn't it be better to accept your own suffering and return to your own life?"

"Yes, I share her pain, but I have the hope that she can recover," Percy told him. "I feel that she's in no danger of dying. She will recover."

"But you can't be sure of that," he argued.

"But the pain I feel now is nothing compared to the pain I experienced when we tried to return to our own lives. I couldn't face that pain again, Damon. I couldn't endure it," she told him.

"But with each day that has passed, your body has been improving. There is greater hope for your recovery than there is for Theodosia. Medicine in our own time has gone so far beyond what was known in this period of history, Percy. The gamble is too great for you to take. The risks are too high. You're living through a period of history where you don't belong. You're here only through the usage of the being of Theodosia. You can't sacrifice whatever life was meant to be yours. And it must be now. Do you think you can survive here alone? Burr is about to sail for Europe. I can't predict how long he'll be there. I won't be able to come to you, and you won't be able to be with me. You'll be totally isolated in this time. Burr's mind is now lax enough, unsure enough that I believe I can manage to transfer us back to the twentieth century—but I need your concurrence, Percy. You must make the effort—if not for your sake, then for mine. I will not go without you. If you choose to stay, then you condemn me to a like fate," he told her.

This appeal was not fair. He knew that she could never be responsible for sacrificing him, whatever might happen to her.

"Damon, don't place me in that position. You know I couldn't doom you to remain here. You must return—without me, if that becomes the only way."

"I do place that responsibility on you, Percy. I won't return if you're not willing to."

"Only give me a little more time, then. Not now. I can't face it now," she pleaded.

"There is no more time, Percy. Aaron Burr means to travel abroad for an extended period of time. It may be years before he returns. It must be now before he sails."

He wanted to sympathize with her, to tell her that he

understood her hesitation, but he did not dare. He forced himself to keep his voice firm and steady and commanding. It was his only hope of influencing her—his strength was what she needed, not his sympathy. There would be time for that later, when she was returned to her own time—to her own husband.

"All right, Damon. For your sake, I'll try again. I will—but not tonight. Give me time to prepare. I must have time to get used to the idea of enduring that pain," she begged.

"Percy, think of what you're risking. We're together now, but if I allow you to retreat into the safety of Theodosia, you may not respond to me again."

"Yes, yes, I will. I promise I will, Damon. You must trust me. I promise you can trust me," she pleaded.

"I want to trust you, Percy, but I have no way of reaching you if you don't wish it—and there is the danger that I might again be spellbound by the charms of Theodosia, and we may both be lost here forever," he told her. "I find Theo so difficult to resist, when I'm with her, I don't want to leave."

"Think of me, then, Damon, and I promise I won't fail you. You've made me responsible for what happens to you. I won't force you to remain here in a relationship that must be incestuous. I promise that when you call me, I'll respond, only I need some time to get used to the idea of surviving the pain. If I don't have the time to prepare, I might not survive it at all," she told him simply.

"Yes, I believe that if you hold my life in your hands, you will respond. I will allow you time, Percy, but only a little. It must be no later than tomorrow, Percy—tomorrow," he said.

"All right, tomorrow," she agreed. "Will we walk down by the river? Will it be the same thing as the last try? It might help me if I knew."

"I don't know. I'll think about it overnight. I'll tell you then. I wish you had brought something with you from that other life—something that might help pull us back through time," he said.

"I'm sorry, Damon, there's nothing. If you're afraid that I'll only try halfheartedly, you needn't worry. I promise

to give you my best effort." She raised her left hand to stroke his cheek as she smiled reassurance at him.

He grabbed her hand roughly and drew it away. "No. No. Don't do that, Percy," he said. He knew he should release her hand, but he held it for a minute.

"I'm sure we'll make it back, Percy," he said, patting her hand. As he did so, he was aware of a hard, cold object. He opened her hand and stretched it out, back side up in order to examine it. The object was a ring. It was a wedding band, but not the one Theodosia ordinarily wore.

"Percy, how did you come by that ring?" he asked.

"Why, that's my wedding ring, Damon," she replied.

"Do you mean it's yours, or Theodosia's?" he wanted to know.

"What difference does it make?" she asked.

"Maybe a great deal. If it's yours, that might be the link we need to draw us back to the twentieth century." He was excited now at the prospect. "Did you have it with you when you came here?"

"Damon, think—think for a minute. You must have forgotten that I didn't come here of my own free will. My body is still in the twentieth century—only my mind is here. Joseph gave this to Theodosia before she left home to come here."

"Yes, of course. Just for a moment it left my mind. I guess I was trying too hard to find some easy path for you to travel through time," he explained.

"There is nothing that will make it easier for me if I have to go through that torture again, Damon. But no matter what, I promise you that I will do it tomorrow."

"Tomorrow, Percy," he agreed and took her hand. He did not want to kiss her cheek for fear he would again feel the desire for her that had overwhelmed him previously. His relationship with Theodosia was now ended.

"Good night, Damon," she said as he left her.

But Percy Brooks did not keep her promise to try to escape the body of Theodosia the following evening. She waited patiently and in vain for Damon to come to her. Aaron Burr boarded the pilot boat at 11 o'clock on the morning of June 7, 1808 and was taken directly to the

ship. Damon Arons was unable to keep his commitment to Percy. He had begun his voyage to England.

When Theodosia heard the news of her father's departure, she made her way to Ballston Spa in Saratoga Springs, with Gampy as her companion, and with the ever-faithful Suzette. Without fail, she wrote to her father, knowing that he would need his spirits lifted by her letters as he ever had when they were apart, possibly more so now because of the greater distance between them.

She sat at the desk in her room in Saratoga Springs and told her father:

"This is the commencement of my 26th year. After your departure, my dear brother"—she continued to maintain the pretense—"with a report that you had been taken by the French; but as it was immediately contradicted, I yielded to my belief in the superiority of the English at sea, and to my reliance in the protection of your friend Neptune . . . Never were hopes brighter than mine. To look on the gloomy side would be death to me, and without reserve I abandon myself to all the gay security of a sanguine hope."

"Do not imagine that my spirits are low, or that I am so weak as to wish you back. Do me more justice. I am cheerful always, and if my feelings ever amount to great gayety, your present voyage is the source of it." The letter was signed by "Mary Anne Edwards."

But Theodosia was neither as gay nor as well as her letter to her father would indicate. On some few occasions when Percy Brooks could stand total submergence no longer, she wondered about the life she was living. How desperately she regretted now that she had not allowed Damon to persuade her to try, on the evening of their last meeting, to return with him. She was now completely alone, as he predicted. Although she was succeeding in living within Theodosia, she was frightened by what future lay ahead of her. While Damon was in America, she knew always that he was within reach; a week or so by coach would bring them together. Now they were separated by a great ocean and a hostile public. There seemed no prospect of their meeting unless Joseph allowed her to go abroad to be with her father. Although Joseph had been

most generous in allowing her to spend time with her father while he was in this country, still to be separated by an ocean was something quite different. Joseph had grown more reserved in his conversations about Aaron Burr since his trial at Richmond. The feeling between the two men had been strained by Aaron Burr's latest disgrace.

Percy was frightened by more than her aloneness in an unfamiliar time. She now began to yearn to return to her own life for quite another reason. It only recently occurred to her that Theodosia's failing health might very well be caused by—cancer. That was apparently the disease which killed Theodosia's mother, and now was possibly affecting the only daughter of Aaron Burr. The fear of it was driving Percy frantic. The prospect of living through the last agonies of a cancerous condition in the first half of the nineteenth century filled her with dread. Now no matter what suffering she would have to face in her own life, it would be preferable to this. But it was too late. Damon was in Europe, and she could do nothing but wait and try to survive, until his return. It was for her the very lowest period of her life, and she realized that it was for Theodosia also.

In Europe it was also the very lowest, bleakest, most depressing period in the life of Aaron Burr.

CHAPTER XVI

Gordon shook his head disconsolately in response to Claire's eager question about Percy's progress.

"The doctors are pretty well convinced now that it's just a matter of a few days, if that long. She's not responding at all well. She just suddenly took a turn for the worse . . . it was so sudden I couldn't believe it. They say that nothing short of a miracle can save her at this point." He tried to sound dispassionate and resigned, which was far from what he was feeling.

"Do you mean there's no hope at all?" Claire asked.

"No, they won't say there's no hope. Apparently, until the patient actually dies, there is hope. But since she last spoke, she has been failing. It's almost as though she lacked the will to fight to live, almost as though she's given in to it," he answered.

"Do your children know how serious it is?" Sam asked.

"I haven't had the heart to tell them. I'm still praying that she'll pull through," he replied. "I've taken a room for you in the motel where I'm staying. I got one on the same floor as mine." He was steering them out of the airport and into the waiting car.

On the road into Charleston and the motel, he said, "It's marvelous that both of you made this trip. I don't know what I expect from you, but I feel better just having you here."

"We were due for some time off, anyway, and we've never been to Charleston before," Sam answered.

"I simply had to come," Claire told him. "I probably would have come even if you told me not to. I have a feeling about this, Gordon. It's funny, because I don't of-

ten give way to feelings of this kind without any real foundation, but this one I can't put away from me. I don't want to encourage you, though, because I don't have any answers for you . . . I just had to be here, that's all."

"I'd like to agree with you, Claire, but the doctors seem so positive that it can be explained medically—only they haven't explained it yet to my satisfaction," Gordon told them.

"Do they know about her claim to be Theodosia Burr?" Claire wondered.

"The nurse made a note of it in her report, I think. They must know, but they don't place any credit to it."

"I don't care what they say, I think it's more than a mere coincidence that she chose that particular period of history," Claire insisted.

"There is nothing to prove that she actually went back there," Gordon remarked.

"But I thought you agreed that she had." Claire was surprised to hear the doubt in Gordon's voice. "I thought you were pretty well convinced of it."

"I guess that was just a wild flight of fancy. Talking with the doctors, it seems more reasonable to believe she's dreaming, having hallucinations about that period, and the reason she picked that period is that Angie disappeared into that time."

"But of all people, why Theodosia Burr?" Sam asked.

"Do they have a theory about why Theodosia Burr?"

"Just coincidence," Gordon replied.

"But when she spoke to you, she mentioned Damon and an island," reminded Claire.

"That's one of the reasons I tend now to agree with the doctors. It was most probably a reference to some tropical island that she dreamed she was on with Damon."

"I just don't think so, Gordon. I really don't. I read as much as I could find about Theodosia Burr, and just before her father was arrested for treason, they were on an island in the middle of the Ohio River. In fact, they seem to have spent quite a lot of time on that island. It figured very prominently in their lives. Why couldn't it be that island?" Claire asked.

"But she called it a beautiful island, Claire. How could

that be an island in the Ohio River? I'm sure she was thinking of something like the tropical island we were going to visit."

"Blennerhassett Island was extremely beautiful from the descriptions I read. It had a mansion that was lavish in design and beautiful furnishings. The grounds around the house were more than one hundred acres, maybe as much as two hundred. There were gardens and crops and natural wilderness. The man who owned it lavished a great deal of money and time and care on the place. Why couldn't that be her beautiful island?"

"Do you really think so, Claire? Do you really think that could be the island she meant?" Gordon asked.

"I do," Claire replied.

Gordon was growing excited by the possibilities this new information presented. Claire made the connection seem so logical. "Do you mean that you think there's a chance Percy may not be recovering because her mind has actually gone back in time? That's incredible."

"Yes, I know it is," Claire agreed, "but I'm convinced of it."

"You too, Sam?" Gordon asked.

"I think it's very possible, Gordon," Sam replied.

Gordon wheeled the vehicle into a parking space and opened the door on the driver's side. Sam emerged from the other side of the car and helped Claire out. They registered at the desk and made their way to their new quarters. Gordon trailed behind him, deep in thought. Yes, he was relieved to have them with him. He found the cold, reasonable logic of the doctors difficult to refute, and he was not familiar enough with the shadowy regions of the world of the supernatural to cling to that belief for long without support. Sam and Claire, at least, had a longer association with that world and were able to accept certain unnatural precepts on their own merits.

Once settled into the room, Gordon repeated his earlier question, which had remained unanswered. "Do you suppose we would be able to help Percy if we went to this island, Claire?" he asked.

"There's nothing left but wilderness and the foundations of a few of the buildings, Gordon. The estate was

destroyed by fire not long after Burr's trial. It would be useless to go there. Besides, it's not open to the public any longer. I don't know if it would be possible to get permission to go to the island at all," she replied.

"In any event, if you're thinking it would be easier to contact Percy from there, it would be a waste of time, just because there's nothing left that was associated with the Blennerhassetts or Theodosia. No, I think it would be better to remain here. This was where her mind retreated, and her physical body is here. This is where her mind should return—if my theory is right," she said.

"Well, where does that leave us then? Just another theory to add to all the rest," Gordon said.

"I tried very hard to convince Elena that she should come with us, at least for a few days," Claire told him.

"Did you tell her what you suspected was happening to Percy?" Gordon asked.

"I had to, of course," Claire replied.

"What did she think? Did she agree?" he asked.

"You met Elena, Gordon. It's hard to evaluate what prompted her reaction," Sam told him.

"Then she didn't agree with you?" Gordon asked him.

"No, she thought Percy must be suffering hallucinations just as everybody else says. But Claire and I feel that comes as much from professional jealousy as from an honest appraisal of the situation."

"But there's no help coming from her?" Gordon inquired.

"It doesn't look that way, Gordon. She leaves for Italy the end of the week. She refused to postpone the trip, and she'll be gone for several weeks."

"Supposing you're right. What do you propose to try?" Gordon asked.

"We really don't know, Gordon. We thought that we'd go to the hospital with you this evening, if that's all right. Just feel our way along. Sam and I have talked of bringing in another parapsychologist to help, if it seems advisable. I called the institute before I left and I can get in touch with a Dr. Burroughs there when I feel it's necessary."

"You're welcome to come to the hospital, certainly, but I told you that you won't be allowed to see Percy."

"We understand that," said Sam.

"But we thought there might be some sensitivity surrounding the area around Percy. We thought maybe we could pick up some kind of waves," Claire told him.

"We're not terribly experienced at that sort of thing, but it's possible. Anyhow, it can't do any harm, Gordon," Sam said.

"No, I suppose it won't do any harm. You'll have to wait in the intensive-care waiting room, though," Gordon told them.

"Then that will have to do," Claire agreed.

It was a long five hours that they spent in the waiting room, only occasionally walking through the corridors of the hospital to stretch their muscles while Gordon made his brief, regular visits to his wife. The atmosphere was not good. Percy seemed to have taken another turn for the worse. The nurse refused to tell Gordon what the doctor had to say about Percy. She remained strapped to the tubes and pumps which carried on the total bodily functions she was still not able to perform. Tests were constantly being made of her blood. She had lost a good deal of weight, and her face looked drawn and pale. No one told him any longer that she would be all right. Gordon left the hospital more discouraged about Percy's prospects than he had been since his arrival.

There was little sleep for any of them that night. It was after midnight before they returned to the motel. Gordon planned to arrive at the hospital early the next morning. He wanted to be able to talk with the doctors as soon as they arrived, and he wanted to see Percy first.

The three of them met shortly after seven the next morning and went together to the coffee shop for breakfast. There was no one to answer the phone that rang in Gordon's room somewhere around seven-thirty. Claire was quiet at breakfast. She had been searching in her mind for something to use in her effort to help Percy return. Suddenly, she was struck with an idea.

"Gordon, do you have a picture of the children with you?"

"Yes, I think I do, Claire. I'll show you when we come back from the hospital later on," he replied.

"That's not what I meant. I want to take it to the hospital. Do you have it with you?"

Gordon checked through his pockets. All he was carrying was his wallet with his identification and his driver's license. His folder of snapshots, which he carried in a separate container, had been left in his room.

"I don't seem to have it. It must be in the room, Claire. I'll get it if you really want me to."

"Please do, Gordon. I'm working on a hunch, and sometimes they're the best kind."

"What kind of a hunch?"

"I'll tell you later if I seem to have any luck," she told him.

Gordon hurried down the corridor to his room. He was really anxious to get out of here and to the hospital. At the end of the hall, he heard a telephone ringing. He looked at his watch. Was it possible that the hospital would be phoning him at this hour? It was 7:45 A.M. "My God, I hope it's not the hospital," he said softly. A call from the hospital could only mean bad news. His heart pounding like a message drum, he hastened his steps until he was running toward his door. He fumbled with the key as he tried to fit it into the lock. As he stepped inside the room, the telephone became silent. He grabbed it. "Hello. Hello!!" he said into the receiver, but there was only the answering buzz of the dial tone from the other end of the line. Almost in panic, Gordon jammed the receiver back into place, and rummaged through his top drawer until he found the small folder of family pictures. This time he ran down the hall to where Sam and Claire were waiting. He shoved the folder toward Claire, saying, "My phone was ringing just before I got to the room, but they hung up before I could reach it. I think it must have been the hospital. Let's hurry."

Together they rushed to the rented auto. Gordon pulled the keys from his pocket and handed them to Sam. "Will you drive, Sam? I don't think I'm in any condition to do it right now."

Sam steered the vehicle out of its parking space and

onto the road, driving carefully through the city streets until he reached the highway.

"Can you push that gas pedal down any further?" Gordon asked impatiently.

"I'm doing the speed limit, Gordon," Sam returned.

The rest of the trip was made in silence. All the comforting words Claire could think of seemed trite and irrelevant. There was no way to ease Gordon's anxiety, and it was better left alone.

It seemed best to drop Gordon at the door of the hospital while they took the car to the parking lot. Sam and Claire walked slowly hand in hand to the entrance of the large building. They were not eager to hear bad news about Percy and dreaded what might be awaiting them. Were all their efforts too little and too late? Was all their theory simply useless speculation? Neither spoke. Without a word passing between them, they each knew what the other was thinking. That came as one of the blessings of living with and caring about each other unselfishly for many years. They now shared not only their love but a deep, comfortable, understanding friendship.

They found Gordon in the waiting room of the intensive-care unit, staring out the window. Had the room been larger, he probably would have been pacing the floor. Gordon had just spoken to Mrs. Mallin. She arrived on duty shortly before they reached the hospital. During the last few difficult days, she and Gordon had become friends or as close to being friends as she allowed herself to become with any relative of a patient. Mrs. Mallin was in her late thirties or early forties, with school children of her own. She had a sympathetic nature, which led her to nursing in the first place, but she learned in time that she didn't dare suffer with each patient or she would have to find another profession. At some point in their career, all nurses made this discovery, but not all of them could find it possible to achieve the delicate balance between detachment and kindness and concern that Mrs. Mallin had managed. She was outstanding in her concern for people. When Gordon appeared at IC unit in such an anxious state, she looked through Percy's chart. It was a difficult thing for her to tell Gordon that there was no improve-

ment in her condition, and that he would have to wait before he would be able to see her. She wished she could give him some hope, but there was nothing encouraging in what she found written on Percy's chart. Nor was she able to give him any indication of when the doctor would be making his rounds this morning. She could tell him only that Percy was still alive, but that carried with it the implication that she might be dying, and she decided it was better left unsaid. She was able to assure Gordon, however, that she didn't know of any reason why someone would be trying to call him—at least, no one had made a note of it, and there was nothing in Percy's present state that would cause anyone to make such a call to him.

Gordon returned to the waiting room and reported to Claire and Sam all that he could remember of his conversation with Mrs. Mallin. The phone call remained a mystery. Not one of the three could think of who would try to contact Gordon at such an early hour.

"I doubt if it was anyone from home," he told his friends. "There's a two-hour difference in time. They wouldn't be up yet."

Sam nodded his head in agreement, and the subject was left hanging in the air unresolved.

Dr. Radcliffe went about his round of visiting patients early. Dr. Carter, a brain specialist, joined him to examine Percy. He came as soon as he finished operating on Mrs. Forman. He was still in his surgical clothes as he and Dr. Radcliffe made their way to Gordon in the IC unit waiting room.

"Mr. Brooks, this is Dr. Carter. I requested that he examine your wife. He's a brain specialist, the best in the South. I didn't want to waste any more time, so I asked him to see your wife this morning," Dr. Radcliffe explained as he introduced the two men.

The unfamiliar sight of the surgical clothing alarmed Gordon. "Did you—did you operate on her, Doctor?" he asked. To his mind flashed the early-morning telephone call. Was it possible they tried to reach him to inform him that Percy was in surgery? But Mrs. Mallin—perhaps she thought it best to let the doctor break the news to him. Dreadful thoughts, all of them aroused by his fear for

Percy's life, ran through his mind, falling over themselves in his rush of apprehension. Was she dead? Was that why they were both here—to make telling him easier for themselves? What was taking them so long to spit out the truth? Very rapidly his frail fragment of composure began to crumble. He grabbed Dr. Carter before the surgeon had time to explain. "Is that it, Doctor? Did you operate on Percy this morning. Is that why they won't let me see her?"

Dr. Radcliffe gently took Gordon by the arm. "No, Mr. Brooks, we didn't operate. We couldn't do that without your written permission, unless it was an emergency. Your wife's condition isn't good, but it hasn't reached the emergency stage," he said.

It was a few seconds before the reality of the doctor's statement made an impression on Gordon's thoughts. Well, thank heaven they didn't have to operate—not yet at any rate.

"I'm sorry, Dr. Radcliffe. You see, there was a telephone call to my room at the motel this morning. I was just coming back from breakfast to pick up something I'd forgotten and I was in the hall when I heard it ring. When I got there, unfortunately, no one was on the other end of the line. My first thought, of course, was that the hospital must be trying to reach me. But no one here seemed to know anything about it. But I haven't been allowed to see my wife this morning either. I put all this together and it seemed to point to the worst possible news. I'm sorry, I guess the strain of it all is getting to me," he said.

"It has been a bad time for you," Dr. Radcliffe told him. "I know how worried you must be. Why don't I give you a prescription for some tranquilizers? You won't be any use to your wife if you stay under this kind of strain too long. Stop at the desk before you leave the hospital. The nurse will have the prescription there."

"I'm sorry to cause you added concern, Mr. Brooks. Dr. Radcliffe asked me to examine your wife this morning. I just left surgery and I have to go back there, so I didn't bother to change," Dr. Carter explained.

"Is—do you think Percy's going to require surgery?" Gordon asked.

"I'm not sure surgery would help her. I can't seem to locate anything specifically wrong. I can tell you there's something not right here or there, but I can't tell you what's causing it. To operate under those circumstances, having no idea what I'm looking for, would not only be senseless but potentially hazardous. So I don't recommend surgery at the moment," Dr. Carter told him.

"So what does that mean? Is she going to get better all by herself?"

Dr. Radcliffe and Dr. Carter exchanged glances, each waiting for the other to speak. Dr. Radcliffe averted his eyes. "Uhhh, Mr. Brooks . . ." he began.

"You mean she's not going to get better? She's just going to go on like this?" Gordon forced himself to keep his voice low and level and calm, a calmness which he certainly didn't feel.

Dr. Radcliffe nodded his head. "In fact, she seems to be sinking."

"But why? Why? She was getting better . . . improving. She opened her eyes and spoke to me. Can't you do something to save her? You can't just let her die." Gordon's voice rose in pitch as he struggled to keep himself from screaming. He was beginning to wonder why he was taking such pains to keep himself under control. What was this crazy hospital going to do, simply stand by and wait for Percy to die? Well, he wasn't going to allow that. He'd tear the place down first.

"There's nothing more that we can do, Mr. Brooks. I wanted Dr. Carter's opinion to see if there was anything that he could find that I hadn't been able to . . . anything . . . anything at all. There's nothing that he can recommend. There is simply nothing more that we can do for your wife," Dr. Radcliffe said.

"Well, I'm not going to accept that. I'm not going to give up. As long as she's alive, I'm not going to give up, you hear? I'm taking her out of here today. I'll take her to New York and get somebody who knows what he's doing. I'm not going to just sit in this damn waiting room until she dies." Gordon gave vent to all the anger and frustration that had built up in him over the last week.

Claire rose from her seat. In two steps, she and Sam

were beside Gordon. Sam put his arm around Gordon's shoulders. Gordon turned to look at his friend, his face a mask of anger, determination, and fright. He had forgotten for the moment that Sam and Claire were with him.

"Calm down, Gordon. You can't do that. You don't really know what you're saying," Sam told him soothingly.

"It wouldn't be possible in any case, Mr. Brooks. The hospital could never release a patient in your wife's condition. She wouldn't survive the trip," Dr. Carter said. "You would be killing her to take her away from here. However, if there's someone you would like to ask to come here and examine your wife, you're free to call in another doctor," he said.

"No." Gordon shook his head disconsolately. "There's no one I know. I just thought there would be more specialists in New York. It seems there must be something that could be done for her."

"I'm sure there are more specialists, Mr. Brooks," said Dr. Radcliffe, "but I'm not sure there are better ones than Dr. Carter."

"Yes, yes, of course. I'm sorry, Dr. Radcliffe. Dr. Carter, I apologize, I'm sorry. I didn't mean that you don't know what you're doing. It's just that I can't stand by and let Percy die," Gordon explained, submitting to the gentle pressure from both Claire and Sam as he sank into a nearby chair. They settled themselves, one on either side of him.

Dr. Radcliffe looked at Claire. "Are you related to the patient?" he inquired.

"No, not related. We're just friends," she explained.

"Oh, I see. I thought I remembered that she came to Charleston with a sister. I thought you might be she," he replied. "I'm sorry I couldn't give you better news this morning, Mr. Brooks. But don't completely give up hope yet."

"Can I see her now?" Gordon asked.

"That's up to the nurse. We don't have anything to say about what goes on in ICU. When the morning routine is finished, she'll let you know," Dr. Radcliffe replied.

"I'll be keeping a watch on your wife from now on,

along with Dr. Radcliffe, Mr. Brooks. The moment anything appears that can give us a clue, we'll notify you. We haven't given up on her, you realize."

Gordon nodded in response. Dr. Carter and Dr. Radcliffe turned and walked from the room. The three friends sat in silence, waiting, waiting, the endless waiting through endless minutes that make up the confining universe of those sterile, cheerless waiting rooms found as a necessary part of every hospital.

The door to the IC unit opened, and Mrs. Mallin rushed into the room, her face controlled but obviously concerned. "Isn't Dr. Radcliffe here?" she asked Gordon.

"He just left," Gordon replied.

"Did he say where he was going?" Mrs. Mallin inquired.

"No. He didn't say anything," Gordon responded. "Is something wrong with my wife?"

Mrs. Mallin didn't pause to answer. She rushed into the hall, almost bumping into Mr. and Mrs. Crichton, who were entering the waiting room. Their daughter was also in the intensive-care unit. Mrs. Mallin murmured an apology to them, told them to wait until she returned, and hurried on her way into the hall, searching in both directions. Catching sight of the two doctors, she called, "Dr. Radcliffe . . . Dr. Radcliffe," and hurried toward him.

Within seconds, she came rushing back, followed by Dr. Radcliffe and Dr. Carter. As the others rushed through the door into the IC unit, Dr. Radcliffe paused only long enough to explain. "Mrs. Mallin says your wife's temperature has shot up suddenly. She seems to be having some trouble breathing. We may have to place her in an oxygen tent. As soon as we take a look at her, I'll send word to you, or I'll be out myself to let you know how things are."

"Oh, my God," said Gordon, sinking down into his chair once more.

"Now don't start worrying more, Gordon. This may be the thing they've been waiting for. This may be the clue to what the problem is. It might have been a turning point." Sam did his best to offer comfort.

"You don't have to try to fool me, Sam. I appreciate

the effort, but I've been around here long enough to know that people don't go running in and out of those doors for nothing." Gordon's reply was more in despair than in sarcasm.

"I still think it may be a turn for the good," Sam said. He stood and strode to the window, looking into space.

"I think so, too," Claire said.

A taxi stopped in front of the entrance of the hospital. There was nothing unusual about that, and Sam stared at it, not out of curiosity, but merely because he happened to be looking in that direction. It kept his mind occupied for the moment. He watched as the door opened and a woman emerged from the cab. The sun shone brightly on her dark auburn hair, a shade that was rich and distinctive. There aren't many women with hair like that, he thought. He continued to watch in fascination as she began to move toward the hospital entrance. Suddenly, it struck him. The figure, the face, the hair were familiar, but he couldn't bring himself to the realization that the woman he had seen was actually here in Charleston—and at this hospital. As he watched the front-entrance door, she opened it and disappeared inside. Only then, when she was no longer in front of him, did the meaning of the scene register on his mind. He turned to face the door of the waiting room which led to the hall. Claire gazed at her husband as he turned and stared at the door. His mouth was open, and she thought he was about to speak to her, but he made no attempt to utter a sound. She followed his stare and she, too, watched the door in anticipation. She could find nothing unusual in the happenings in the hall, and the feeling of suspense pressed on her.

"Sam, what's wrong?" she asked, unable to understand what could possibly have caused the look on his face.

"She's here, Claire," Sam replied.

"Who's here?" Claire asked, making no sense of it whatsoever.

"She is. She just arrived," Sam reiterated.

It was not more than a second later that Elena Blakelev entered the room. All three stood up, staring at her.

"Why, how did you get here?" Claire burst forth.

"I took a very early flight this morning. I tried to call you at the motel, but there wasn't any answer in either room. I guess you'd already started for the hospital. So I took a cab and came directly here from the airport."

"That telephone call—that must have been you," Gordon said.

"How is Percy?" Elena asked.

"I'm afraid you've come too late, Elena. Her fever has gone up suddenly and she's getting worse," Claire answered with a trace of bitterness in her voice.

"I'm sorry you made the trip," Gordon told her. "The doctor said a short time ago that there was nothing more they could do. I'm afraid she's not going to last much longer."

"I'm sorry, Gordon, I really am," Elena said.

"At least you'll be here for the funeral," Claire threw at her with a voice that carried daggers.

Elena stared at her. She didn't reply. She should have come when Claire first suggested it, but she hadn't. She deserved that rebuke, but did Percy deserve her fate?

CHAPTER XVII

The years of exile in Europe were far worse than any days of his life that he had known. The news of his disgrace and trial had preceded him. He was not afforded the universal acceptance that he had anticipated or that he had known in prior years. His company was not sought after, once the novelty of his presence had worn away. Although there were many true friends who welcomed him in England, he was without funds and without means to support himself. Once more, he was reduced to borrowing what money he needed, and soon exhausted the source of supply. The English government considered him untrustworthy, and while they appeared to be considering his proposal to establish a government on their behalf in Mexico, still England remained at peace with Spain and found the prospect of exciting a war with that nation not to their advantage. Burr proceeded to France, where he hoped to present a like proposal to Napoleon, but again he failed in his attempt. In fact, Napoleon refused to receive him, to Burr's great disappointment. In each country he visited, for a short time his company was favored, but as his fortunes fell and his debts mounted, his popularity waned. When at length he had exhausted the kindness and patience of friends, he was then reduced to living in an unheated garret room, with but one meal a day, and that frequently merely a loaf of bread. He was discouraged, but still he bobbed from scheme to scheme, writing Theodosia in detail about each of them. Her pride in him and her frequent letters gave him the courage to survive.

Through the four long years, Damon Aarons lived in

misery, misery of mind as well as body. Now the will of Aaron Burr was at low ebb. He would easily forgo living through these difficult years. Damon believed it would not be difficult to part himself from this forlorn man. The era of his life which Colonel Burr had so desired to relive was over. Obviously he had purposed that were he able to relive it, he would not fail to establish his kingdom in Mexico. But the events of history had been written and could not be altered. Having started the cycle, he must now continue his life through to his death, or until the departure of Damon Aarons. Damon would willingly have departed from the wretched life of this unenviable man. But he dared not leave Percy behind. Aaron Burr traveled from country to country, involving himself in many money-raising schemes and even more love affairs with women—of both high and low station. He began a practice which he had studiously avoided all his life. He indulged in the consumption of strong liquors to excess and was frequently drunk. It helped him forget his present humiliation.

Always present in his mind was a longing for Theodosia and for his little grandson, Gampy. He longed for home and those he loved as Damon Aarons longed to return to Percy. But Aaron Burr was an outcast in his own country, and he had become unwelcome in several European countries as well. It was with great relief that Burr was, at last, able to gain permission to sail aboard the ship *Aurora*, bound for the United States. He preferred to travel under disguise and took the name "Adolphus Arnot." He arrived in Boston on May 4, 1812, with only a few close friends whom he knew he could trust, aware of his true identity. It was not until June that he was able to raise the money for his passage from Boston to New York on a sloop named *Rose*, using the name "Mr. De Gammelli." Ever, through all his ordeals, New York remained his home. No sooner had he docked than he proceeded at once to the home of his friend Samuel Swartout at 66 Water Street, only to receive no answer to his knock on the door. The following day, when he succeeded in locating his friend, he wrote Theodosia about his arrival in New York City and his first night on home soil again:

"I knocked and knocked, but no answer. I knocked still harder, supposing they were asleep, till one of the neighbors opened a window and told me that nobody lived there. I asked where lived Mr. S. Of that she knew nothing. I was now to seek a lodging.

"But few houses were open. Tried at two or three taverns, all full; cruised along the wharf, but could find no place. It was now near midnight, and nobody to be seen in the street. To walk about the whole night would be too fatiguing. To have sat and slept on any stoop would have been thought no hardship; but, then, the danger that the first watchman who might pass would take me up as a vagrant and carry me to the watchhouse was a denouement not at all to my mind. I walked on, thinking that in the skirts of the town I might meet at that hour some charitable [person], who for one or two dollars . . . would give me at least half a bed; but seeing in an alley a light in the cellar of a small house, I called and asked for lodging; was answered yes; shown into a small garrett, where five men were already asleep; a cott and sort of coverlid was given me, I threw open the window to have air, lay down, and slept profoundly till six.

"I rose, paid for my lodging twelve cents, and sallied out to 66 Water Street, and there had the good luck to find Sam alone. He led me immediately to the house of his brother Robert, and here I am in possession of Sam's room in Stone Street, in the City of New York, on the 8th day of June, anno dom. 1812."

He had, at last, returned home, and his heart was glad. He remained at the home of his friends, who busied themselves arranging for his immunity from arrest. His creditors were persuaded to leniency, and an item in the paper was placed to test the temper of men's disposition toward Burr. It stated that Colonel Burr had returned to Boston and was on his way to New York. No one appeared to be unduly disturbed by the news. At last the stigma of the duel with Alexander Hamilton was lifted. Burr opened an office for the practice of law at 9 Nassau Street with dispatch. There he met with prompt success. Aaron Burr would be able again to earn his own living and to repay his debtors. It was not the glorious future he had antici-

pated, but it was far superior to his existence of the last few years. Within the first twelve days, he earned two thousand dollars. The life he saw ahead of him was filled with the brightness of hope.

He walked the streets of New York with a jaunty step and raised his hat in polite greeting to all the ladies. Except for the absence of his dear Theo and Gampy, he was content. And that absence must soon be remedied. His smile was especially cheerful to the messenger who brought the letter from Theodosia—the first to arrive since his return, and he was certain that it would inform him of his immediate reunion with him. Eagerly he opened the epistle, taking note with a practiced eye that it was far more brief than he expected. But no matter, her own dear person would more than compensate him for the brevity of the message.

But the joy went from him as he read what *she* had written him:

"A few miserable days past, my dear father, and your late letter would have gladdened my soul: and even now I rejoice as much as it is possible for me to rejoice at anything; but there is no more joy for me; the world is a blank.

"I have lost my boy. My child is gone forever. He expired on the 30th of June. May Heaven, by other blessings, make you some amends for the noble grandson you have lost . . . Of what use can I be in this world . . . with a body reduced to premature old age, and a mind enfeebled and bewildered. Yet . . . I will endeavor to fulfill my part . . . though this life must henceforth be to me a bed of thorns . . ."

Theodosia wrote very briefly of the death. She could not bring herself to elaborate on the tragic event. It had happened so quickly, so unbelievably heartbreakingly fast, that even now she had difficulty realizing that it was so, that her child was gone. One day his illness seemed no more than an ordinary head cold, but then a fever developed and he was dead within hours . . . before the doctors who had so hastily been summoned could save him.

Aaron Burr was dazed. His hand dropped to his side, and the letter fell to the floor. His grandson, his Gampy,

the hope for their future, was dead, having lived only eleven years to gladden their lives.

"My poor Theo, my dearest Theo," he said. "How you must grieve."

He sank to the chair at his desk, and drew a sheet of paper before him. Taking a fresh quill pen, he began to compose a letter to Theo, urging that in spite of her poor health, she must come to him at once. The climate in New York had ever been more beneficial to her than had that of South Carolina. She was all that he had left to him, and he did not wish to risk that she might follow Gampy—suddenly take a turn that would mean her death before help could arrive to her.

Yet, he reasoned, it was a great sacrifice for Joseph to make, but surely not too great, considering her bereavement. Burr had suffered greatly, too, and the solace he and Theo could bestow upon each other would be of far more value than all the medicine the doctors might dose her with. Damon Aarons was encouraged by the prospect that Percy would soon be traveling to New York. He had no means of discerning the length of time that had passed in their own century since they last met here. He was aware, somehow, that it would not be the same four years—would it be four months, four weeks, four days, four hours? He could not tell, but it must be sufficient time for the pain that her twentieth-century self suffered to be diminishing. This, then, would be the time for them to make their way back to those lives from which they had come.

But the letter, when it arrived in South Carolina, was greeted with less enthusiasm than Burr had anticipated. Theodosia was desperately ill, and Joseph intended to see that she recovered before he would allow her to undertake a long journey.

Aaron Burr would not be denied. He insisted, with the concurrence of Damon Aarons, that she come north. Joseph personally was prevented by law from leaving his state. He was now Governor of South Carolina, and the country was engaged in a war with England. South Carolina had an extensive coastline, subject to attack from the British warships, and he would not leave even if he

were able to do so. To allow Theo to travel that distance alone was beyond thinking. Damon Aarons gave Burr no peace until Mr. Timothy Green was dispatched to South Carolina to escort Theodosia back with him to New York. When Green arrived, having some knowledge of medicine, he discerned that Theodosia was too ill to undertake the journey by land. She suffered not only from her physical complaints but also the effects of the nervous collapse she had undergone while Aaron was in exile. It had left her emaciated and prey to nervous fevers.

Together Theo and Mr. Green persuaded Joseph to allow her to make the journey by sea.

"My darling Theo, it is the midst of winter. The sea voyage is cold and damp. You could not survive such an atmosphere," he protested.

"Joseph, I promise I shall. Father's reception of me will be so warm and protective that I shall not mind the voyage at all. I so yearn to see him again, Joseph. Do indulge me this one request," she pleaded.

"Would that I could find the means to restore your health first," he told her. "Could you not wait until the warmth of Spring when the ocean breezes are pleasant, my dearest?"

"By then I shall be returned to you with roses blooming in my cheeks, dearest husband, and we shall give a grand ball so that all may see what a ravishing beauty your wife has become," she replied.

"I do not need the opinion of others to know that my wife is not only beautiful but my most precious possession, since the . . ." But he caught himself before referring to the death of their son. It hurt Theo too much to remember the tragedy. They both knew what was left unsaid, and Theo rushed across the room to throw her arms around her husband, giving and seeking comfort in the simple gesture. They stood together, lost in memories of other days.

Joseph reached down to lift his wife in his arms. He carried her tenderly to the couch, wondering at the lightness of her. Perhaps she was right. Perhaps an extended visit with her father would restore her to health. She could not continue as she was for many more years.

They found a schooner-built ship at Georgetown and secured passage for Theodosia and her maid and Timothy Green. The boat was a privateer of the name of *Patriot*, captained by Captain Overstocks, and was noted for her speed. This pleased Joseph, who desired that the ocean voyage be as short as possible.

In the morning of December 30, 1812, the three passengers boarded the ship. Joseph accompanied them and spoke with Captain Overstocks. He wanted to request again that every courtesy be afforded his wife, and every comfort be provided for her welfare. He received assurances that she would be well treated, that every care and attention would be afforded her on the voyage. Joseph handed Captain Overstocks a letter addressed to the British admiral, asking for free passage for the wife of the governor of South Carolina and her companions. In the event that they were apprehended, the captain was to present the letter to the captain of the English vessel, and they would be released and allowed to continue unharmed. The captain took the paper from Joseph and went immediately below to place the document in safekeeping in his cabin.

Joseph returned to Theo. Parting from her was the most difficult task he had ever been called upon to undertake. How he longed to recall his promise to allow her to depart, but he could not at this late time. He took her by the hand, and together they stood on the deck, staring down into the green water. Their life had not been as they dreamed it in those long-ago days when they were first married and so full of youthful hope and optimism, but their love was more than they had thought it could be. It had grown and deepened with each new tragic blow life had dealt them. The parting was equally difficult for Theodosia, but deep in her mind another voice eagerly urged her on. It was an almost desperate cry to rejoin her father, and she could not leave it unheeded. It was giving her no peace.

Shortly before noon the captain approached the couple to request that Joseph go ashore. They would shortly be sailing with the tide. Joseph turned to Theodosia and gathered her in his arms. He kissed her with a tenderness

and passion to last him through the bleak and lonely months ahead. At last he released her and stood holding both her small gloved hands in his own. He said, "Remember always, my dearest, that you have been the center of my life and the source of my love. What happiness this life has seen fit to bless me with has radiated from you."

"My dearest husband," Theo said gently, kissing his cheek. "How I do love you."

Joseph released her hands, and escorted by Captain Overstocks, departed the ship.

Only moments later, the ship began to weigh anchor and to move on the outgoing tide across the bar off Winyah Bay at Georgetown, South Carolina, heading for the open sea. Joseph remained on the dock, waving until the vessel passed from his vision and he could no longer glimpse the slender figure of his wife in her new coat of blue-gray wool standing on the deck and returning his wave.

The ship continued on its course northward. But at some hour in the middle of the night, a great storm began to blow, with waves slapping at the side of the ship. The sails were down, and the violence of the storm caused three men to strain at the great steering wheel to attempt to keep it on course. Still they kept drifting out into the distance of the open sea. The waves broke higher and higher, crashing water into the cabins. Sailors rushed about, bailing out water as best they could. Theodosia awakened as water hit her face. She gasped for air. Water seemed to be filling her lungs and she could scarcely breathe. Was she imagining it or could the boat be spinning around and around? They seemed to be caught in an endless, spiraling vacuum. The winds were dying. Someone screamed to the captain that the compass was twirling about to no purpose. It could not be controlled. An eerie light penetrated the area as the vessel glided into glass-smooth waters like a ghost ship of some ancient Viking tale. The sailors ceased bailing out the water and gathered on the decks to wonder at the sudden atmosphere of mystery into which they had unwittingly and unwillingly been propelled, as Theodosia and Suzette labored to force the

water from Theodosia's lungs lest she should drown. Theodosia struggled from the bed only to slip and stumble into the foot of water which now covered the floor of her cabin. She lay in the cold water as Suzette tried frantically to revive her. In desperation, she at last left her mistress and made her way out of the cabin to find Mr. Green. The sensation of the icy water around her was not alarming to Theodosia, but the difficulty with which she breathed terrified her.

Dear God, she thought, please don't let me drown before I see father. Struggling with all her might, she made her way out of the cabin and up the steps to the deck. There she fell against a coil of hemp rope, coughing and gasping for breath as she watched with amazement the endless curtain of sea and sky as the ship glided deeper and deeper into the region which would some day become known as the "Bermuda Triangle."

CHAPTER XVIII

The door to the intensive-care unit swung open, and Dr. Radcliffe spoke to Gordon, framed in the doorway.

"Your wife's fever is a hundred and six, and her lungs are rapidly filling with fluid. She has pneumonia. I'll have to perform a thoracentesis. You won't be able to see her for some time, so why don't you and your friends have some coffee in the cafeteria." He started to close the door behind him.

"What did you say? What is it you're going to do?" Gordon asked.

"It's a procedure to draw out the fluid from the lungs."

"Is it painful?" Gordon asked.

"Not really," Dr. Radcliffe assured him.

"Then can I see her?"

"We have to give her an ice bath to bring down her temperature first. It'll be awhile. But as soon as possible the nurse will let you know." Before Gordon could reply, Dr. Radcliffe disappeared behind the closed door, leaving the four of them to wait in silence.

"Damn," Gordon said, hitting his fist against the palm of his other hand. "All I ever seem to do around here is go have coffee. That seems to be their prescription for everything, as though it were a panacea."

Claire tucked her hand under his arm. "What do you say we try their tea this time?" She smiled at him.

"Elena, I thought you were positively not coming," Claire said as they were seated around a table in the cafeteria.

"I wasn't. I really didn't believe what you were telling me." Elena answered.

"What changed your mind?" Sam questioned.

"First of all, I learned that you had called the institute and spoken to Dr. Burroughs. I didn't think you would do that, Claire. I mean, I didn't think you were that serious about it. So yesterday I finally took the time to do a little reading on Theodosia Burr myself. I guess both of those things together did it," she said. Then, in answer to the surprised expressions of her companions, she added, "I began to feel something while I was studying about Theodosia. I don't know what or why, but something kept tugging at me, pulling at my mind. I knew it was something in the extrasensory realm. That's when I began to suspect that Claire was right. It grew clearer and clearer the more I read. I knew that somehow Percy had been able to transfer her mind back to combine with Theodosia Burr. I was certain that she spoke the truth when she talked to you, Gordon. Everything dovetailed as beautifully once you accepted the initial premise that she did go back in time. And I can tell you with some certainty that I didn't find it an easy thing to believe. She has all the seeming manifestations of having a mind that is elsewhere, and for her that elsewhere is as Theodosia Burr."

"But what do we do to get her back here, Elena?" Gordon asked.

"What can we do to save her?" Claire persisted. "I told you that Theodosia disappeared on an ocean voyage. How do we know when that would be? We just can't let that happen. We have to do something soon."

"Has she recognized you, Gordon? I mean, when you touch her, or when you speak to her, does she open her eyes, does she speak or respond at all?" Elena inquired.

"Not at all—not anymore, that is."

"Is there anything from this life that she would respond to? Anything that you can put into her hand? Something real that she can touch?"

Gordon shook his head. He could think of nothing.

"I had Gordon bring some pictures of the children, Elena. Do you think that could be the link?" Claire asked, looking through her purse for the folder of snapshots.

"It might. I would prefer to have something hard and

firm that she could feel even if she doesn't open her eyes."

"Gordon, that watch of Damon's that he gave to Percy. Do you have it? Did Percy have it with her at the time of the accident?" Sam asked.

Gordon reached into his pocket and brought forth the watch, which he had carried with him since he had found it in Percy's drawer at the motel. Somehow he always expected her to awaken and ask for the watch. Why that should be so he couldn't explain, but he had carried it with him every day just to be ready.

"Yes, that may be the thing. Gordon, when you visit Percy, put the watch into her hand. Concentrate on bringing her back, tell her over and over again that you need her here, that she must return. Tell her that she is free of Theodosia and must come back to you, do you understand?"

"Yes," Gordon nodded.

"While we're waiting in the room for you, we'll all concentrate on the same thing," Elena told him.

They made their way back to the IC unit and again waited. It was after eleven o'clock when Dr. Radcliffe appeared and told Gordon, "Your wife has had a rough time, and the treatment hasn't been pleasant for her, but her fever has started down, and her lungs are drained. She seems to be resting comfortably."

"How is she, Doctor?" Gordon asked.

"She's stable, which isn't saying too much," Dr. Radcliffe replied.

"Isn't she going to make it?" Gordon asked.

"I still can't answer that question, Mr. Brooks. We have to wait and see. There's no change in the prognosis. We still have to treat each little symptom that comes up and pray for the best. By the way, do you recall someone named 'Gampy'?" he wondered.

"No, I've never heard the name," Gordon replied. "Why do you ask?"

"As we were treating her, she said 'Gampy, my poor Gampy,' and then she began to cry—or sob rather. We had quite a time with her then. It made draining her lungs very difficult.

"'Gampy' was the name she used to call me when we

were young, Doctor," Elena said. Then she gave Gordon a look of conspiracy as she added, "It was such a silly name, I never liked to have her tell anyone when we grew up. And heaven knows, I was never about to tell anyone myself. It's too ridiculous. That's why you never heard it before, Gordon. What a thing for her to remember at a time like this, imagine that. May I go in to see her now, Doctor?" she asked.

"Are you a relative?" Dr. Radcliffe asked.

"Yes, I'm her sister. I flew down from New York this morning. I wasn't able to get away before this. In fact, I had to cancel a trip to Italy in order to come. I would like very much to see her," Elena told him.

Dr. Radcliffe hesitated a moment, then he looked at Gordon, who nodded his head in agreement. He was a little too surprised to dispute Elena's claim and probably wouldn't have done so in any case. He didn't know what she had in mind, or even what she could accomplish, but anything was worth trying.

"You'll have to tell the nurse who you are, but I see no reason why you shouldn't see your sister," Dr. Radcliffe told her as he was leaving.

"Claire, what snapshots are in that folder?" Elena asked.

Claire pulled forth the folder and began to go through the pictures. Elena turned to Gordon and said, "You go explain to the nurse that Percy's sister is here and get permission for me to visit her. By the time that's all settled, I'll be there with you. While you're doing that, I'll explain to Sam and Claire what they can do here."

Elena sorted through a dozen pictures and selected three—two of the children and one of Percy, Gordon, Linda, and Bobby beside the pool. She handed a picture of Linda and Bobby to Sam and one to Claire.

"Take these and each of you concentrate on putting Percy in that picture. Concentrate as you've never concentrated before. Don't let anything interrupt your thoughts until I come back. It might help if you turned your chairs to the wall, so you wouldn't be distracted by people passing in the hall. Just think—physically move

Percy by thought from the past into that picture," she told them.

Gordon appeared in the door and motioned for her to join him. "Good luck," Elena said as she disappeared through the door.

Elena followed Gordon to the small, draped cubicle which housed Percy's hospital bed. She paused for a moment as Gordon pulled aside the drape to allow her to pass into the small allotted area. Elena remembered Percy as a vital, lively woman. This did not seem to be that same person, this pathetic, inert, nearly emaciated figure which lay perfectly still before her, covered by a white sheet, her head wrapped like a mummy in a swath of bandages, and with tubes running through her nose, into her arm, and heaven only knew where else that couldn't be seen.

"Go ahead," Gordon whispered as Elena showed no sign of moving. "You go to the other side of the bed."

Elena did as instructed. She passed the foot of Percy's bed and stood on the side opposite Gordon. Against the wall there was a chair. She drew it close to the bed and sat studying Percy's face. Gordon looked at Elena.

"I'm sorry, Gordon, so sorry. I never dreamed that it was this critical. Put the watch into her hand. We ought to work as fast as we can. I have negative vibrations here beside her. There's not much time remaining to her, I'm afraid. There isn't time to experiment with anything. We have to just go ahead and try something and hope it works."

Gordon put the watch into Percy's hand, but it fell out as she made no attempt to grasp it.

"Make her hold it, Gordon. Fold her fingers around it. You hold her hand tightly and make certain she has the watch firmly in her fist." Gordon did as she told him. "Concentrate your thoughts on Percy and Aarons at the moment when he gave her the watch. Move her back to that time. Force her back here with your will. Don't let anything or anyone disturb you. Just concentrate on that and nothing else," she told him.

Elena placed the picture of Percy and the family by poolside in Percy's other hand. then began to croon softly.

"Percy. Percy. Listen to me. Listen, Percy. You can hear me. I know you can hear me. You must come back. Theodosia, let go . . . let go of her. Let her come back . . . come back to her own life, to her own time . . . Percy, answer me. Your daughter needs you. Come back to her. Your son calls to you, Percy. Come . . . come . . . we're helping you . . . come . . ."

Percy's head moved slightly, almost imperceptibly, her lips parted. "My son . . . my son . . . is . . . dead . . . Gampy . . . dead . . ." She spoke so softly that it was barely possible to make out her words as her lips formed them.

"No . . . no, Percy. Your son is alive. He is here. He needs you." Elena kept up the steady patient tone. "Come back to him. Come back to him."

"Dead. He's dead . . . my son is dead. I'm dying. Leave me to die," Percy moaned.

"Percy, you must not die. You must come back. My dearest. Your son is alive. Truly, he's alive." Gordon tried to follow the steady, even tone Elena had used, but his voice had an urgency to it.

"Theodosia, where are you now?" Elena asked.

"I can't breathe. My lungs . . . water . . . it's so hard to breathe," Percy gasped. "It's so . . . so peaceful out here. I don't want to come back. I don't want to leave this place. There are . . . no troubles . . . no problems . . . everything still and beautiful . . ."

"No. No, the water is no longer bothering you. It's no longer in your lungs. Where are you?" Elena repeated.

"I'm going to . . . father . . . but that was before . . . before this strange enchantment . . . this . . . haven . . ." Percy answered.

"No, you must not stay, Percy. You must come back here. You must come back to us." Beads of sweat were covering Elena's face. She placed her free hand on Percy's forehead. "Theodosia, you must release Percy's mind. Let it go. Let it go. Let it float through the void of time and return to her own body," Elena commanded.

"I can't come back. I can't. I must find Damon." Percy's head protested at the light touch of Elena's hand. She seemed to be experiencing an electric shock generated

by Elena's fingertips lightly placed on her forehead. Gordon watched intently at the scene being played out before him.

"Where is Damon?" Elena inquired.

"He's waiting for me in New York. When I'm with him . . . come back . . . can't come back without Damon . . . can't . . ." Her voice began to drift off as though her mind were once again retreating into the past.

Elena's eyes widened in alarm and blazed with determination. "Come back, Percy. Come back." Her tone was sharp but quiet. It was commanding and steady. "We won't let you go."

"Must . . . must go." Percy's lips again formed words, but little sound escaped them. "Must go . . . Damon . . . but it's so bright here . . . so luminous . . ."

"Damon is here. You must come here to find him," Elena told her.

"No . . . no . . . he . . . waiting," Percy said.

"No. You're wrong. Damon could not wait for you. You took too long. He's here. He thought you came back without him. He's here. See, he has come back to set his watch. His watch, Percy. You're holding his watch. Feel his hand on yours. He's come back for his watch."

Percy's hand moved slightly under Gordon's fingers. She seemed to be feeling the watch. She seemed to be responding.

"Listen to me, Percy. Damon is here. Now you must come back. He's waiting here for you. Come to him here." Elena's eyes seemed to be as dark as two pieces of black onyx, and her face was beginning to show the strain of forcing her will upon Percy, literally willing Percy's mind to respond. With a motion of her head, she indicated that Gordon was to speak to Percy.

"Damon is here, Percy. Listen to him. Answer him. Come to him," Elena commanded.

"Percy, I am here. I had to come. But you can find me here. The watch. Feel the watch. Feel my hand. Come, Percy. Come." Gordon made a supreme effort to keep his voice smooth and compelling when every fiber of his being urged him to plead with her. But he did his best to

copy the tone adopted by Elena and to keep his mind in tune with hers.

"Damon?" Percy said. "Damon?" Through the sea of black and murky water, through the endless tunnel of time which culminated in a gray fog of pain, Percy struggled to follow the pinpoint of light, moving inch by inch toward it. "Damon," she repeated. Her body began to heave with effort, with struggle, her head began to roll from side to side.

"Hold her, Gordon. Don't let her pull the tubes loose," Elena ordered.

"Elena, stop her threshing. Make her calm down. Does she have to go through this?" Gordon asked, his voice an intense whisper.

"Yes," hissed Elena in reply.

"Damon . . . Damon?" Percy called again, continuing the struggle.

"Answer her," Elena directed.

"Yes, Percy. Here I am," Gordon replied. He felt a sudden urgent pressure on his fingers. He glanced at Elena to see if she was aware of it. She was only aware of Percy's face, which was now covered with beads of sweat to match her own. Elena's concentration was so intense that her eyes seemed to sear through Percy's own closed eyes and penetrate the back of her mind. Gordon responded to Percy's grasp by raising his other hand to hold hers. Her body was quieter now. The violent heaving had stopped and she was quiet again. Gordon waited anxiously. He wanted to call her name, but he felt an extraordinary intensity in the room and somehow sensed that he must not disturb the delicate balance about them. He could only clutch Percy's hand, which now held Damon Aarons's watch of its own accord, and stare at Percy's face.

"Percy, you can come now. You're all right. You can come by yourself now. Make the effort. Try, Percy." Elena's voice was scarcely more than a hypnotic whisper.

Percy's eyelids fluttered. Hope sprang into Gordon's anxious mind, but sank again as her eyes closed.

"Percy, you can come now. Come by yourself now," Elena repeated.

Again Percy's eyelids fluttered. They fluttered again,

and Percy blinked against the brightness of the unaccustomed light. "Damon?" was the first word she spoke.

"He's here, Percy," Elena lied, closing her eyes from exhaustion.

"Darling," Gordon cried and bent to kiss her cheek as best he could between the tubes and bottles and the stands which held them. "Oh, Percy." He did not bother to fight back the tears which sprang to his eyes. "Oh Percy, you're going to get well. You're going to live," he said.

"Of course, I am, Gordon," she answered weakly, managing a slight smile.

"I'm sorry, but you'll have to leave now," said a voice from behind them.

Elena and Gordon had been so deeply immersed in their task that for the moment, they had forgotten about time. Was it possible that all this had happened in so few minutes? It seemed like a hundred years—or possibly two.

"Don't go," Percy said, still clutching Gordon's hand.

"Could I stay a few more minutes?" Gordon asked.

"I'm sorry, but I can't allow that," replied the nurse.

"You can see her again in an hour."

"I'll be back, honey, don't go away again," Gordon told his wife.

She wondered what that remark meant, but to try to figure its meaning was too much effort for her just now. She smiled at him again and closed her eyes. "Remind me to tell you of the strange dream I had," she told Gordon as he was leaving.

"I will," he promised.

"I'm so thirsty. May I have some ice water?" Percy requested of the nurse standing by.

"I'm glad you're well enough to ask for it. For a while there, we thought you were going to die," the nurse remarked.

How odd, thought Percy, and she managed a smile for the nurse just to prove that she was very much alive. "For a while, I thought I was dying, too. But, you know, just when I thought I was, I heard someone calling me. I wanted to die, but they wouldn't let me. Then I felt as if I

had to live, as if they were forcing me to live, commanding me to live. That sounds silly, doesn't it?"

"No, not really. A very high fever like the one you had can make you delirious. Then you imagine all sorts of things. But the fever's gone and you're going to get better now. You rest. I'll get you some ice chips." The nurse smiled back at Percy as she left.

Percy looked about her at the white curtains enclosing her little square of the intensive-care unit and at the variety of tubes to which she was strapped. When the nurse returned, she must remember to ask what she had done to bring her to this hospital. It was obvious that she was very sick, but she didn't know why. She recalled that the day Angie left, she had gone off by herself . . . in the car . . . she had stopped at some old mansion . . . then she was driving the car again . . . but that's all she remembered until she woke up just now—except for that strange dream. It didn't matter right now, she was tired and tomorrow was enough time to find out whatever she didn't remember.

The following day, Dr. Radcliffe greeted Gordon with a smile on his face. "It's miraculous, Mr. Brooks. I don't know what did it, but your wife is greatly improved. She's going to recover. Yesterday seems to have been a crisis point, and she's passed it successfully."

"What does Dr. Carter think about damage to her brain?" Gordon asked.

"As we said, there's no sign of it. It's just that her brain was behaving in such a peculiar manner. Now that she's recovering, everything seems perfectly normal. She'll be just as good as new when that wound on her head heals, and it's beginning to look better. Wish I had some idea of what made the difference, but I guess you don't really care as long as she's going to get well," Dr. Radcliffe told him.

"As long as she's getting well, that's all I care about, Doctor," Gordon replied.

"It just goes to show that with all we know, medicine is still an imperfect science," Dr. Radcliffe said. "It's still going to be a long recovery, you must understand that."

It'll be several weeks before she'll be able to travel back home."

"I knew it would be," Gordon answered. "Can you tell me how long?"

"I have no idea right now. Everything about the case has been so strange. We have to wait and see at what rate she progresses," Dr. Radcliffe said. "You know in some ways I feel as though I never really had control over this case at all."

"As soon as you can let me know, I'd appreciate it. I'll have to call my office in Iowa and arrange for an indefinite leave of absence," Gordon said.

"That's probably a good idea. I can let you know in maybe a week or ten days how much longer we'll have to keep her here," Dr. Radcliffe replied.

"Good. That'll be a help," said Gordon.

"We should be able to move her into a private room—out of intensive care in a couple of days. If she continues this improvement, there's no reason to keep her there much longer."

Gordon smiled. The worst was over, and the rest would be only a matter of time. And to have her in a room of her own would mean that he could spend time with her instead of that infernal waiting room.

Elena refused to visit Percy in the hospital room, and she wouldn't allow Claire or Sam to visit either.

"She's not ready to understand what happened or how it happened. She will in time and then we can tell her. But we're not going to let her know yet. It's too close to her right now. And I don't want her to think about Damon yet. I don't want her to realize that Damon isn't here. I can't predict what effect that might have on her. I don't know how she would react, and I just think it's best not to take the chance," Elena explained.

"But, Elena, she'll insist on being able to thank you once she knows," Gordon protested.

"Nobody is going to tell her what happened, Gordon, at least not for a while. When she does find out, then she can thank me. Don't be concerned about it, Gordon, I'm not. Besides, you've thanked me, haven't you? Someday, though, when she's completely recovered, I'd like to come

to Iowa and talk with her about it, if she remembers. I'd like to know exactly what she thinks happened in her dream. If she talks to you about it, try to remember as much as you can and write it down for me. Even better, see if you can get her to put it down on tape. It may give us a clue as to exactly where Damon Arons is. But don't feel that you have to rush her. Just let it come out as she wants it to," Elena requested.

Claire was terribly upset at first that she wasn't even going to see Percy before she had to go back to New York, but what Elena said, of course, made good sense. The sight of her friends from New York might alarm Percy and do more harm than good. Percy would think it strange that they flew all the way from New York just to visit her for a day or two. A telephone call or flowers or a letter she could accept, but to realize that these close friends of Damon had come to see her at this time might cause her to wonder about her dreams of living as Theodosia Burr and then to question whether or not Damon was really returned. At the moment it was better that she think of the whole thing as a dream—or even better yet, not think about it at all.

Three days later, after Percy had been moved to her private room and seemed to be recovering as well as her doctors hoped, Elena decided it was time for the three of them to go home. Gordon took them to the airport in time for their early-morning flight back. Good-byes were awkward. There was so much to be said and yet so little that could be put into words. To express his gratitude would only embarrass all four of them; still, he wanted them to know how grateful he was to have had their support and friendship through the ordeal. But they knew without being told.

Sam shook hands with him and stood by as Claire embraced Gordon. She repeated again that if they were needed, it would be only a day before they could return. Gordon repeated his thanks and assured her once more that the doctors were agreed Percy was on the road to recovery and that she needed only time and care and rest from now on.

When Claire stepped aside, Gordon found himself facing Elena.

"Elena, I don't know what to say to you. I don't know what there is to say to you that would express how much gratitude I owe you," he said.

She shook her head. "Don't, Gordon. Don't. We both know what you want to say, and that's all that's necessary. But I have much to say to you also. It has to do with what a fool I was and how full of remorse I am at having caused Percy to suffer so long and come so close to dying. I had never experienced such a thing before, but then I suppose that's why I find the world of supernatural things so very fascinating. There's so much that we've never experienced before. And I must admit I was envious to think that she might have found Damon when I couldn't. I don't know what to say to you, Gordon," Elena replied.

"It's not necessary, Elena. If it weren't for you, Percy would never have pulled through, I'm sure. We'll always be indebted to you for that. Whatever else happened before isn't important any longer."

He kissed her on both cheeks in a gesture of warmth and friendship that told her of the unspoken words of appreciation and understanding flooding his mind. She returned the embrace with equal feeling.

"Don't forget, if you learn anything about Damon, from Percy's dream, be sure to let me know. We still have to find a way to help him return," she said.

"Yes, I will," Gordon promised.

He waited until they had boarded their plane, then he drove to the hospital to spend the day with his wife.

To his surprise, when he arrived Percy had company. It was the policy of the hospital to limit the number of visitors visiting a patient at one time, and Gordon was forced to wait until the other visitors were finished. Who in the world could be with Percy, he wondered. He knew no one in Charleston and was certain that Percy didn't either. The only people in the area who knew her had just flown back to New York. Gordon sat in the lobby and waited impatiently. He picked up a magazine and began to leaf through it but realized that it was two years old and put it

down again. He watched as the elevator door opened and a young boy and obviously his mother stepped off. They were followed by two men. Gordon shifted his weight in the chair and uncrossed his legs. He wondered how much longer it would be until he'd be able to see Percy. Absent-mindedly he followed the small group as they walked through the hospital lobby. One of the men stopped at the information desk to speak with the receptionist. As they talked, the woman pointed toward Gordon. The man said a few words to his companions, and they began to walk toward Gordon. Uncertain why they should be approaching him, Gordon stood and waited for them.

The man who had spoken to the lady at the desk held out his hand as they stood before Gordon. "Mr. Brooks, I'm Dr. Chester," he said. "This is Mr. and Mrs. Kempley and their son, Roger. We were just up to visit your wife."

"How do you do," Gordon replied in surprise.

"We're the people who brought her here. We pulled her out of the car down in the river, and we've wanted to visit her ever since she came here. I requested that Dr. Radcliffe take the case. He's been a friend of mine for many years. I know how good he is. I've kept in touch with him, and he's reported how she was getting along. We felt really bad when he thought she wasn't going to pull through. She looks fine, now. We were really happy to learn that she's doing so well."

Gordon's face relaxed as he began to understand their concern. "I can't thank you enough for what you did for my wife . . . all of you," he said.

"There was nothing else to do. She was hurt pretty bad and we happened to be there," Fred Kempley told him.

"Besides, Roger here was right there when it happened. He was riding his bike across the bridge and he slipped for some reason. She swerved to avoid hitting him and broke through the guard rail on the bridge. We sort of felt responsible," Sarah Kempley added.

"I still appreciate your help. It saved her life. You more than made up for the accident," Gordon told them.

"I'm sure glad you don't have any hard feelings against me," Roger said.

"None at all, son. We're so grateful she's alive, that's

all. It was very nice of you to come visit her," Gordon told them.

"We would've come sooner if Dr. Radcliffe would let us. Anyhow, she's doing dandy, and we'll be back to see her again; just you count on that," Fred said.

"She'll be glad to see you, I'm sure," Gordon remarked. "And thanks again for coming," he said as they turned to leave. Then he hurried to the elevator and to Percy.

During the three weeks that Percy was in the hospital mending, the Kempleys visited frequently. She and Roger had formed quite a friendship by the time Dr. Radcliffe finally agreed to release her, and Percy was sorry to leave the young boy, but she was even more eager to see her own two children. Perhaps she liked Roger so much because it helped her over her longing for Linda and Bobby.

She said very little about her dream. Within the first few days after she regained consciousness, she had spoken of the dream to Gordon and tried to explain to him how real it seemed at the time, as though she were truly living in another time. She spoke of confusing Damon Aarons with Theodosia's father, but Gordon never let her dwell on the dream. He encouraged her to put it out of her mind. When she was completely recovered, he told her, there would be lots of time to talk about it. She did make an effort to push it from her mind, but she never quite succeeded. When she was all well, she meant to tell him everything she could remember about it—maybe some lazy evening while they were relaxing over drinks. It seemed such a long time since they had done that, such a long time since she had been home. How she longed to see Linda and Bobby again. It was easy to turn her thoughts to the two children and away from Damon Aarons. She would think about him sometime later.

CHAPTER XIX

Aaron Burr established a habit of walking along the Battery at the tip of Manhattan Island as he waited for the *Patriot* to sail into the harbor. When it was past the date of expected arrival, he wrote Joseph in concern, but he did not abandon his habit of walking back and forth along the Battery, looking out over the harbor, in the vain hope that the ship would appear on the horizon. It was a long time before he was able to face the awful realization that the ship was lost at sea. The double tragedy—the loss of his grandson and the loss of his daughter—saddened his heart and aged him as nothing else in his eventful life had done.

His law practice flourished. He bought new clothes to replace the threadbare outfits with which he had made do for such a long time. He ate simple meals, he resumed his habit of drinking only a little wine when he dined and very rarely on other occasions. Never was he drunk these days, as he had been on his sojourn through Europe. And so he was able to begin paying off his debts much sooner than even he had anticipated.

By mid-February, all hope was abandoned for the *Patriot*, and articles began to appear in the newspapers throughout the country concerning the disappearance of Theodosia and the ship. Rumors began to spring up about the fate of the vessel. Some reports held that the ship had been captured by the British and that all hands were forced to walk the plank, including the lovely gentlewoman on board. There were rumors that the ship had been captured by pirates and the lady passenger had been taken to some Caribbean island by the captain of the pi-

rate ship. It was true that a storm had blown up during the time the ship was making its voyage. There were those who firmly believed that the ship went down in the storm. And still there were those who believed that the ship sailed out into a mysterious area of the ocean where no one ever saw or heard from them again. For some reason, Aaron Burr could not believe that Theodosia was gone, and for years he would continue to make his daily walk along the Battery, waiting, waiting for his daughter to return to him.

Damon Aarons also walked and wondered. Was Theodosia really gone from his life? Was there any possibility that she had survived? Was Percy still with her somewhere on an island, still locked into this time? Had she somehow managed to escape back to her own life if Theodosia had really been drowned? If so, he would be free to return to his own life. Aaron Burr no longer maintained the desperate hold that he once had. But did he dare return? Would he be deserting Percy if he did? What actually had happened to her and how could he go about finding out? If he could not find Theodosia, how could he find Percy?

The letters Aaron Burr received from his son-in-law indicated that Joseph believed she had drowned. He was forced, at length, to accept that cruel fact. But did Damon dare accept it? Did he dare take the chance? He wished he could. Aaron Burr was no longer the brilliant, driven man he had been before the affair on Blennerhasset Island, and to escape him now was a distinct possibility. But Damon's conscience refused to let him make the attempt. He was haunted by the speculation that Theodosia might have survived, and Percy with her. He could not bring himself to leave Percy alone in this time, when she had come back to find him. No matter how long it took—he came to the ultimate decision—he would remain until there was some definite indication of the fate of Percy Brooks.

Perhaps, if she had returned, somehow miraculously, to her own body, her own life, she would be able to tell his friends, and they would make an effort to communicate with him. There was nothing for it but to continue the life he had led since his arrival in the nineteenth century as

Aaron Burr. It had been an eventful life, possibly even interesting, had he been relaxed enough to observe the happenings dispassionately. But now he was ready to return, he was eager to return to his own time, to his life, where he would be happy to remain, never again undertaking a venture such as this one. But until he knew the fate of Percy, he never could.

As Aaron Burr strolled along the Battery walk, he gazed longingly out over the water, so serenely, so unconcernedly, so gaily rippling on its way to the ocean. He paused and studied the movement for a long time, wondering if he would ever see again the beautiful lady who was lost on the voyage he had urged her to make. Damon Aarons stared a very long time at an island in the water which was so familiar to him, not as it appeared at the moment—a mere speck of land in the vast expanse of water—but as he remembered it from his own life in the years that still lay ahead of this relatively young country. He wondered if he would ever again see the beautiful lady who would stand there in the time to come, his own time. For there was a small portion of land, Bedloe's Island, and there would be erected the Statue of Liberty, a welcoming figure for all people who came to this harbor. He wondered if she would ever again welcome him—would he ever be able to return to her, as a wanderer to a distant land coming home? But the island before him was vacant now, and Damon Aarons could only wonder.

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